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CONTENTS

	Page
LADY NOVELISTS AND THE LOWER ORDERS, by *Q. D. Leavis*	112
'INTELLIGENT IDEALS OF URBAN LIFE,' by *Uno Åhrén*	133
TRADITION AND BEN JONSON, by *L. C. Knights*	140
REVALUATIONS (VIII): SHELLEY, by *F. R. Leavis*	158
CORRESPONDENCE	181
COMMENTS AND REVIEWS	188

EDITORIAL (p. 188). POETS AND THE DRAMA, *Murder in the Cathedral* and *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, reviewed by T. R. Barnes (p. 189). RECENT VERSE, review by John Speirs (p. 195). THE BOND AND THE FREE, *Growing Opinions, I Was A Prisoner, Means Test Man, Caliban Shrieks*, reviewed by W. H. Auden (p. 200). 'THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND,' *Literature and a Changing Civilisation*, reviewed by L. C. Knights (p. 203). COLERIDGE AS A DUAL PERSONALITY, *Coleridge and S.T.C.*, reviewed by R. G. Cox (p. 205). *The Destructive Element*, reviewed by H. A. Mason (p. 207). MR. MAUGHAM AND SPANISH LITERATURE, *Don Fernando*, reviewed by E. M. Wilson (p. 209). ETHICAL TASTE, *Patterns of Culture*, reviewed by D. W. Harding (p. 214). THE LETTERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS, *The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, The Correspondence of Gerard Manley Hopkins and Richard Watson Dixon*, reviewed by F. R. Leavis (p. 216). *British Scientists of the Nineteenth Century*, reviewed by C. E. Lucas (p. 231). *The Appreciation of Poetry*, reviewed by Frank Chapman (p. 234).

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LADY NOVELISTS AND THE LOWER ORDERS

> ' These books should be read by the workers because they find a different point of view and how we are thought of by the other class.'
>
> Mrs. Scott, *Life As We Have Known It.*

MRS. MITCHISON'S new novel, *We Have Been Warned*,[1] naturally recalls *To Tell the Truth* by Mrs. Williams-Ellis published two years ago. These novels seem to demand attention here less for the reasons for which they are read and praised than for what they reveal about the outlook of their authors. Both are attempts, more and less direct, to arouse revolutionary feeling on behalf of the workers of England. By mating an aristocratic Highland female with an Oxford don who is Labour candidate for an industrial area and sending them both on a trip to Russia Mrs. Mitchison has contrived a setting in which anything she wants to talk about can be plausibly dramatized. By sending a suspicious Komsomol to England in search of the truth about the condition of the workers under capitalism Mrs. Williams-Ellis has tacked together a light structure from which to make a Voltairean survey of our society. The first embodies nearly as uncritical an enthusiasm as the second for what they assert are the aims and values of Soviet Russia, and both spring from the same innocently bourgeois background ; to the reader whose class-feeling derives from a less advantageous social origin there is something peculiarly irritating about the implicit assumption of authority that is apparent in these writers—an assumption grounded, it would appear, on nothing but class. Both give the same impression of having had to go out, notebook in hand, to examine proletarian homes and their inmates to equip themselves for writing about what their literary ancestors would undoubtedly have called the lower class. Much of both novels is intended to serve

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[1]Constable, 8/6.

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as social propaganda of a desirable and familiar kind—abolish slums, provide better housing, abolish the Means Test, cure unemployment, provide easy access to information about contraception for all, etc., etc. In so far as they do this few of their readers are likely to disagree, or to be much enlightened ; the creation of such an elementary social consciousness I should have thought could be done more convincingly by popular factual booklets such as Hutt's *Condition of the Working Class in Britain* and more vividly by other methods—*e.g.* simple illustrated articles such as *The Listener* has run in the past. But one readily agrees that this work is never finished: there can hardly be too much repetition and insistence.

It is a small matter that first provokes criticism. Mrs. Mitchison's novel shows spasmodic doubts about, and Mrs. Williams-Ellis's positive animus against, any intellectual worker engaged in almost any other activity than demonstrating the evils of back-to-back houses and the Means Test ; the exceptions allowed seem to be the hierarchy of useful scientist, heroic engineer and that modern idol the mathematician. This position is evidently open to objections, and in any case it seems too easily assumed by advanced political thinkers—and Communism is fashionable now—that such other activities necessarily go along with absence of a social conscience and are unprofitable to the community, while you may retain your leisure, servants, holidays and cocktail parties with an even enhanced complacency provided only you learn the Russian alphabet and take a trip to the U.S.S.R., and say very loudly all the time that back-to-back houses are disgusting and the Means Test inhuman. You thus enjoy the luxury of having it both ways *and* the pleasure of feeling superior to those who haven't. Thus a new snobbery seems to have been created (amusingly illustrated by the dedication to *We Have Been Warned*—unfortunately too long to reproduce here). There is a complacency of enlightenment no less undesirable than the complacency of conservatism.

Thus aroused, one constantly discovers further material for uneasiness. Isn't it odd that a genuine concern for the emancipation of the workers and an immersion in working-class society should not have produced at least freshness of perception and some response to the peculiar quality of the life dealt with—should not,

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in sum, have resulted in technical originality and locally authentic writing? One remembers the vitality and spontaneity of much of *The Forty-Second Parallel* and its sequel. Mrs. Williams-Ellis would probably agree to a description of *To Tell the Truth* as simple propaganda in the form of a pleasing fiction; objections must be that the propaganda is not merely simple but simple-minded and that the fiction is irritating in the shallowness of that bright complacency which takes itself for Voltairean irony, while the discussion of ideas is puerile.

We Have Been Warned is more ambitious. It does not deliberately set out to simplify as Mrs. Williams-Ellis has done; all kinds of social and personal problems come up for discussion and the worlds of Oxford, Bloomsbury, an industrial centre, the Highlands, Moscow and others, provide juicy material for description of the gossip-column order. In fact, apart from, or in spite of, its political views and general intellectual pretensions, *We Have Been Warned* is just another bestseller. To be more particular, passages from throughout the book could be mixed up with passages from the fictions of Mr. Gilbert Frankau and perhaps no one but their authors would be able to re-sort them correctly. The style, when occasions for imitating *The Waves*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, James Joyce, the moderns in general, and Mrs. Mitchison herself in her former manner as a novelist of ancient history, do not obviously determine it, is just that of the average magazine story ('Dione, her hands behind her head, and looking definitely rather pretty, added . . .' is about the staple). The general competence of the writer is thus dubious. What confidence can be placed in the political 'thought' of a writer who visualizes in terms of magazine-story situations, whose perceptions can be embodied in *pastiches* and clichés and whose emotional equipment is no more refined than that of the bestseller of the corrupt bourgeois public? As an intellectual (and she is self-consciously one) this novelist seems to be no better equipped. Her opinions and values are not personal, they are those of a 'set,' fashionable not intelligent—accepted without any suspicion of criticism as 'modern.' Take the following characteristic example from the passage where the heroine (whom in a general way—apart, that is, from incident—the reader is invited to identify with the authoress) is expressing what England means to her:

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> ' She was proud of Dunbar and Shakespeare and Donne ; she was proud of Virginia Woolf and Lawrence and Shaw and Wyndham Lewis and Aldous Huxley.'

This is Mrs. Mitchison's conception of the English literary tradition. Dunbar is a concession to the heroine's northern birth, Shakespeare goes without saying, Donne ' came in ' some time ago, Mrs. Woolf has long been a *chic* value and Lawrence notoriously ' advanced ' ; no irony seems to lurk in the inclusion of the last three names: they have been taken over in the same uncritical fashion as currency values, though so ill assorted (in *To Tell the Truth* also Shaw is a value). Similarly she knows that Browning has gone out but that Tennyson is coming in again, that Eddington is not an authentic great thinker, that your ideas to command respect must be coloured with science or given an anthropological note, and so on. Her ability to appreciate Lawrence may be determined by her bright idea that he might have written that typical Lord Leighton-Academy piece ' Now sleeps the crimson petal, now the white.' Apart from the matters of social amelioration on which all decent people agree, her enlightenment seems to amount to nothing more than knowing what are the right, that is to say the fashionable, views on an assortment of topics, and campaigning on behalf of contraception, the free use of the more respectable improper words, the necessity for dealing with ' sexual repressions,' and moral and physical nudism for all.

I have thought it worth going into these points in some detail because such an equipment is the usual one nowadays for such a writer. It amounts to a major disability. Its effects are most obvious when Mrs. Mitchison tries to describe the sufferings and worthiness of the English working-class and when she tries to conjure up an alluring Utopia for us to strive to bring about, a Utopia that, like Mrs. Williams-Ellis, she sees being achieved in Soviet Russia. In the section ' Under the Red Flag ' we are shown a society for whom the machine is an absolute value. The women, who are the heroic figures in it, are engineers, technicians, radio specialists (*cf.* Mrs. Williams-Ellis's Candide who is also an engineer) ; these occupations, we are to assume, have intrinsic value, for there are contemptuous references to the ' typical petty bourgeois ' life in which the married woman makes a profession

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of home-keeping and child-rearing instead of, like the heroic Marfa, working in a factory all day and locking up her child in her absence. The further superiority of the women of this society consists in willingness to sleep casually with any party member and to share or exchange lovers as convenience dictates. Mrs. Williams-Ellis presents us with a similar picture of an admirable society. Neither thinks of questioning the ends which radio, for example, serves, or feels any doubts about machine-tending as the good life. Neither has any use for the sensitiveness that would find such a Utopia repulsive. Perhaps that is why they fail so notably in their dealings with the English workers. No amount of reporting of trivial conversations, and no amount of observation of the district-visiting kind, however conscientious and however creditable to the industry and heart of the novelist, will produce a convincing substitute for adequate response to the quality of the working-class life.

The easiest way to make this point is by referring the reader to an American novel, Grace Lumpkin's *To Make My Bread*, which won the Gorky Prize for Proletarian Literature for 1933. Its immense superiority to the English novels is not due to this authoress's greater concern for artistry ; she is less concerned for it, and this novel only misses greatness, it seems to me, because of a lack of craftmanship. Its superiority lies in the fineness and percipience of the author's make-up. There is no obtrusion of the author's personality—no novel could be more impersonal ; she is so genuinely concerned for the people she writes about that she does not make her concern an excuse for asserting superiority ; she does not have to offer us a worker's paradise of emancipated machine-tending because simply by reflecting the quality of the lives of the Southern mill-hands she leaves the reader convinced that such a people, given economic freedom, could live to exemplify the best possibilities of humanity (which I suppose is what everyone would agree a society should do if a revolution is to be justified). Miss Lumpkin's novel is better literature as well as better propaganda, and it is better propaganda because it is better literature.[1]

[1]The nearest thing to such a desirable kind of propaganda we have over here seems to be Storm Jameson's *The Mirror in Darkness*, of which the second and latest volume, *Love in Winter*, offers

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For instance, Miss Lumkin has perceived that simple people living at the lowest economic level are not necessarily incapacitated for delicacy and refinement of feeling, and perhaps are the less likely to acquire an inadequate set of values—one for instance in which, as Mrs. Mitchison seems to think, having only a 13/11 Co-op. frock for best would be a major distress and attending a Bloomsbury studio party would be a major satisfaction. You cannot in fact unless you are yourself capable of perceiving fineness in others and valuing it duly, convincingly attribute an outlook demanding admiration to those whose cause you may have most at heart. If your own conception of pleasure is trivial then you have no criterion of seriousness to measure by. Consider the example of desirable high-level amusement Mrs. Mitchison offers—and she gives it some prominence: it is one of the positives of the novel, like the Russian section. The heroine is taken to a studio-party that is alleged to be the equivalent of the 'good parties' of the Athenians and the kind of amusement that everyone will rejoice in at the millenium. It turns out to be the vulgarest idea of a good time—dancing to the gramophone, too much alcohol, and universal petting—with the added thrill of rubbing shoulders with artists (presented in the persons of 'a very eminent painter [who] asked her to be his mistress, and she was very proud of that till she heard him ask someone else the same thing in exactly the same words ten minutes afterwards' and a recently undergraduate New Poet who 'sees civilization working up for a new religion' and 'dances very well and he kisses one's neck while dancing, which is so clever of him'). The arts are additionally represented by someone singing carols and a folk-song and Campion. There is also pseudo-intellectual conversation of an incredible inanity. 'Yet there's nothing wrong with this party except that it isn't actively getting on with the revolution,' and the fact that the

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a marked contrast to *We Have Been Warned*. Miss Jameson too has set out to give a cross-section of contemporary society, and the comparison, most noticeable in such particular instances as their treatments of the election and the celebrities' party, is entirely in her favour. She shows how much can be done by observing and composing with nothing more showy than stubborn honesty, humility and the sensitiveness that goes with solidity of character.

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working-class are not present is also a drawback but she thinks they might be got to fit in.

So Mrs. Mitchison and Mrs. Williams-Ellis do not do justice to their subject. They even do the workers' cause a positive disservice. A key passage in each of their novels is worth examining.

This is the summing-up of the Candide of *To Tell the Truth* on the cultural situation generally:

> ' He had tried to show Mr. Hake how it had once been true that it was difficult for the workers to have enough of anything. Because of the struggle with nature, they had no time to have culture. So works of art and science were made only by the bourgeoisie, and paid for so heavily by the workers that it made the more sensitive bourgeois doubt if they were worth having. But now, he explained, with electrification, there was no excuse for this exploitation of the workers, and the mass of the people could have culture . . . " But now all that needs to be done can be done without exploiting anyone, and, because of machines, all the work of the world can be accomplished in peace and justice. And what is that splendid glorious fact except this very thing—Progress? So now we must have a classless society everywhere, not only in Russia, and then soon we can have all we need, Isotto Hispanas, for example, without exploitation. Technics! Technics coming after Science sets free the world." '

The above piece of theory may profitably be compared with the conclusions implicit in the following piece of direct observation (the meaning ascribed to ' culture ' by each writer deserves especial note):

> ' The present inhabitants of the Laurel Country are the direct descendants of the original settlers who were emigrants from England and, I suspect, the lowlands of Scotland . . . It is fairly safe, I think, to conclude that the present-day residents of this section of the mountains are the descendants of those who left the shores of Britain some time in the eighteenth century.
>
> The region is from its inaccessibility a very secluded one . . . the inhabitants have for a hundred years or more been completely isolated and shut off from all traffic with the rest of the world. Their speech is English, not American, and, from the

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number of expressions they use which have long been obsolete elsewhere, and the old-fashioned way in which they pronounce many of their words, it is clear that they are talking the language of a past day.

Economically they are independent. As there are practically no available markets, little or no surplus is grown, each family extracting from its holding just what is needed to support life, and no more . . . Many set the standard of bodily and material comfort perilously low, in order, presumably, that they may have the more leisure and so extract the maximum enjoyment out of life . . . They are a leisurely, cheery people in their quiet way, in whom the social instinct is very highly developed . . . . They know their Bible intimately and subscribe to an austere creed, charged with Calvinism and the unrelenting doctrines of determinism or fatalism . . . They have an easy unaffected bearing and the unself-conscious manners of the well-bred . . . A few of those we met were able to read and write, but the majority were illiterate. They are, however, good talkers, using an abundant vocabulary racily and often picturesquely. Although uneducated, in the sense in which that term is usually understood, they possess that elemental wisdom, abundant knowledge, and intuitive understanding which those only who live in constant touch with Nature and face to face with reality seem able to acquire . . . .

That the illiterate may nevertheless reach a high level of culture will surprise those only who imagine that education and cultivation are convertible terms. The reason, I take it, why these mountain people, albeit unlettered, have acquired so many of the essentials of culture, is partly to be attributed to the large amount of leisure they enjoy, without which, of course, no cultural development is possible, but chiefly to the fact that they have one and all entered at birth into the full enjoyment of their racial heritage. Their language, wisdom, manners, and the many graces of life that are theirs, are merely racial attributes which have been gradually acquired and accumulated in past centuries and handed down generation by generation, each generation adding its quotum to that which it received . . . .

That culture is primarily a matter of inheritance and not of education is, perhaps, a mere truism . . . Of the supreme

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cultural value of an inherited tradition, even when unenforced by any formal school education, our mountain community in the Southern Highlands is an outstanding example.'[1]

The most obvious criticism to make of the first passage is that Mrs. Williams-Ellis can really know nothing about the cultural history of the working-class of her own country, however well up she may be in that of Russia. The assertions that ' Culture,' even if it be so preposterously narrowed down to a mere equation with ' works of art and science,' is something that the workers never enjoyed until ' electrification ' and Soviet Russia have brought it within their reach, and that access to this Culture was impossible for those without the leisure which the new mechanisation is producing, are simply ignorant nonsense ; and such ignorance of the social history of the English working-class looks odd in one so devoted to their cause. No one would of course suggest that all the English workers, or the whole of any other class in any country, are or have been at any period ' cultured ' ; but it can be reasonably asserted that there has existed in this country a working-class ' culture ' in Cecil Sharp's sense—indeed, as he points out, his Laurel Country community is only an isolated example of the old English rural culture—and it can also be shown that working-class men could have access if they chose to seek it (and many did) to the best ' Culture ' (in Mrs. Williams-Ellis's sense) of their time and nation, until this generation.

We have abundant evidence to this effect. Is it possible that Mrs. Williams-Ellis has not even read the well-known Chartist document *The Life and Struggles of William Lovett in his pursuit of bread, knowledge and freedom* (1876, reprinted with an introduction by R. H. Tawney 1920), a document so completely representative that, happening to have followed up an interest in this question of working-class culture, I could cite a large number of close parallels covering over a century and a half in time and most of England and Lowland Scotland in space.

Their implications in sum form an indisputable case against Mrs. Williams-Ellis. They could mostly say with J. D. Burn

[1]Cecil Sharp, *English Folk-Songs from the Southern Appalachians.* Introduction to the first edition, 1917.

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(born 1820) 'Like a large number of my own class I was born in poverty, nursed in sorrow, and reared in difficulties, hardships and privations,' but neither that, nor the dawn-to-dark working hours nor the generally miserable wages could check their tremendous vitality of spirit. Here is a significant passage from Lovett's autobiography:

> 'That which first stimulated me to intellectual inquiry, and which laid the foundation of what little knowledge I possess, was my being introduced to a small literary association, entitled "The Liberals," which met in Gerard Street, Newport Market. It was composed chiefly of working men, who paid a small weekly subscription towards the formation of a select library of books for circulation among one another. They met together, if I remember rightly, on two evenings in the week, on one of which occasions they had generally some question for discussion, either literary, political or metaphysical . . . Seeing that their library contained the works of Paley and other authors that I had often heard cited from the pulpit as the great champions of Christianity, I felt an ardent wish to read and study them . . . I now became seized with an enthusiastic desire to read and treasure up all I could meet with on the subject of Christianity, . . . and often have I sat up till morning dawned reading and preparing myself with arguments in support of its principles. Political questions being also often discussed in our association, caused me to turn my attention to political works, and eventually to take a great interest in the parliamentary debates and questions of the day. In short, my mind seemed to be awakened to a new mental existence ; new feelings, hopes and aspirations sprang up within me, and every spare moment was devoted to the acquisition of some kind of useful knowledge. I now joined several other associations in its pursuit, and for a number of years seldom took a meal without a book of some description besides me . . . I commenced also about this time the collection of a small library of my own, the shelves of which were often supplied by cheating the stomach with bread and cheese dinners.' etc.

This surely sounds like a civilized version of the barren 'educational' course pursued by the Russian factory-workers of

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We Have Been Warned and regarded respectfully by Mrs. Mitchison (' Maria showed them proudly her pile of books, an algebra book with the page doubled down at the beginning of quadratic equations, one on elementary physics, several copy-books half-full of what might have been essays, and three text-books of economics or Marxist history.').

There is not merely the widespread autobiographical evidence of this kind and biographical evidence such as that collected for example by the maligned Samuel Smiles in his *Lives of the Engineers*, *Industrial Biographies*, etc. There is the tremendous surge of working-class aspiration[1] of which the Mechanics Institutes and working-men's societies for ' self-elevation,' self-improvement,' etc., in the earlier half of the nineteenth century were only surface indications. The minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee on Public Libraries in 1849, with reference to the whole country, are highly suggestive of the extent of the political consciousness and serious reading common to the poorest of what was then called ' the industrious class.' Chartism was a wave of cultural as well as political aspiration (for the way in which Chartist meetings and activities inextricably mingled political with literary enthusiasm see for instance *The Life of Thomas Cooper. Written by himself*), and that progress from an awakening through religious (or atheistic) enthusiasm to political consciousness and general self-culture which is illustrated from Lovett above, is a pattern that can be traced in the lives of large numbers of the articulate members of the working-class long before Chartism was thought of. It occurs equally among the agricultural and the industrial workers, and it is completely independent of formal instruction. [A useful survey of some of the facts of this matter is contained in A. E. Dobb's *Education and Social Movements* (1919)].

I do not see how you can avoid the conclusion that these people got their personal culture from each other (each case-history

[1]Typical of its period is the title-page of *The Autobiography of an Artisan* (1847) which quotes ' More life and fuller 'tis we want ' and bears a dedication ' To the Artisans and Labourers of England, Fellow-Workers in the Holy Cause of Self-Elevation, and the Friends of the Industry of England.'

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of course implies a whole background or *milieu*)—that is, from a common stock which constituted a traditional culture and which had the important virtue of including that ' culture ' dependent on ' works of art and science ' which is conceived by Mrs. Williams-Ellis as possible only to the leisured class.[1]

This traditional culture has moreover profoundly affected the culture that is expressed in literature, indeed it would be truer to say that the latter has always depended largely on the former. It is not merely that we have such solitary monoliths as *Pilgrim's Progress,* for instance, standing up here and there throughout our literary history ; there is the English language itself, the most powerful testimony possible to the existence of that culture rooted in the lives of the workers, and perpetually renewed from them.[2]

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[1]' . . . as foreigner observers recognized, the general intelligence of Englishmen was of a high standard. The speeches and writings of those whose business it was to make as direct an appeal as possible to the people are a proof. The shorthand version of the demagogue Thelwall's address to the famous Copenhagen Fields mob in 1795 is a straight-forward appeal to the understandings of his listeners. It is in vain to look in it for the foolish digressions, the cheap witticisms, the puerile anecdotes, with which a more modern orator would conciliate the impatience or pander to the ignorance of his audience. But the instance of Thelwell, who, experienced as he was in public speaking, could not make the people behave as he wished on this occasion, is not so good a one as that of Thomas Paine, who, although the prophet of a revolution which never took place, admittedly produced an enormous effect by his writings. His influence extended not only to the lowest grade of those able to read, but to large numbers who, although unable to read, were willing to listen to what was read to them. The last of his principal works, and the most influential, the *Rights of Man,* was far from being a revolutionary squib, filled with appeals to greed and class jealousy. It was a sober treatise upon the form of government best able to secure the persons and property of the people whom it represents.' A. F. Freemantle, *England in the Nineteenth Century, 1801-1805.*

[2]For illustration see Logan Pearsall Smith, ' Popular Speech ' and ' English Idioms ' in *Words and Idioms.*

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This traditional culture is not easy to define or even describe briefly—it needs at least an anthology to illustrate it—but summarily it can be said to consist of two elements, participation in the national culture (chiefly through Shakespeare, Bunyan, the Authorised Version, and later on Dickens) and another participation that is manifested as a quality of character. The second point brings up another quotation, a betraying passage from *We Have Been Warned* (the heroine is talking with her husband):

> ' " Mrs. Grove is dead. In childbirth."
>
> " Oh, lord. Is he fearfully cut up about it, poor chap?"
>
> " I don't know. They're all so matter of fact. They make me feel as if I was another race, full of elaborate hot-house, high-brow feelings. Are we as bad as that?"
>
> " The Two Worlds. People like you have been bothered about that for the last hundred years. Yes, a lot of our fine feelings are just a very unimportant by-product of too much money. That's why I can't stand all these novels and poems about them." '

Far from being high-brow, this recalls a familiar low-brow attitude (*cf.* Warwick Deeping and ' Sapper '). However, we may take it that in spite of a confused desire to have it both ways Mrs. Mitchison wishes to assert that the working-class lack the ' finer ' feelings of her own class and that this is a mark of superiority because it comes from closer contact with reality, that (a) workers cannot afford to have ' fine ' feelings and (b) therefore a system of values which excludes ' fine ' feelings is the most desirable. Her account of the Soviet state is a logical conclusion from this argument ; such a day-dream must occur inevitably to writers in this position so that though it corresponds with Mrs. Williams-Ellis's account of Russia one would not be surprised to learn that it has no more basis in actuality than the Noble Savage convention of a previous age.

But to anyone with first-hand knowledge it will seem that Mrs. Mitchison is doing a gross injustice to the respectable poor of her country. There is fortunately more convincing evidence to this effect than one's personal observation. Such a collection as that published by the Hogarth Press in 1931 under the title *Life As We Have Known It* shows the uneducated worker to be

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capable of no less subtle and perhaps more impressive kinds of feeling than some authors of propaganda on their behalf. These letters from Co-operative working women to a General Secretary of the Co-operative Guild are the better evidence for not having been written for publication (punctuation and spelling have presumably been regularized). The impression left by these women is very different from that left on one by the workers, selected to secure sympathy, in the novels under discussion. The quality of the working-class character is conveyed in concrete instances, so that Mrs. Woolf, in an acute and sensitive introductory letter, rightly characterises it as ' stimulating,' ' not downtrodden, envious and exhausted ; they are humorous and vigorous and strongly independent.' So George Sturt noticed in his cottage neighbours a remarkable spiritual temper: ' To some extent doubtless it rests on Christian teaching, although perhaps not much on the Christian teaching of the present day. Present-day religion, indeed, must often seem to the cottagers a tiresome hobby reserved to the well-to-do ; but from distant generations there seems to have come down, in many a cottage family, a rather lofty religious sentiment which fosters honesty, patience, resignation, courage. Much of the gravity, much of the tranquillity of soul of the more sedate villagers must be ascribed to this traditional influence, whose effects are attractive enough, in the character and outlook of many an old cottage man and woman . . . It is not a negative quality . . . in the main the force which bears them on is a traditional outlook . . . in the little cottages the people, from earliest infancy, were accustomed to hear all things—persons and manners, houses and gardens, and the day's work—appraised by an ancient standard of the countryside.'[1] Absence of such sensitive reaction to the character of their material is responsible to a great extent for the failure of these novels as propaganda. Raw facts are invariably more moving than when similar situations are worked up into their fictions.

Here for example is the fiction:

' The guide led them along the corridor to the great hall, with the benches and flags and the dais with the picture above

[1] George Bourne,' *Change in the Village* (1912).

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it. This was rather magnificent, Dione thought, beginning to wake up more thoroughly, this light, this white and scarlet and unpainted wood, and the great low-brow picture of Lenin! . . . Dione found herself pressed against Donald, and he was whispering: " He was here, Lenin was here ; oh, Dione, we were not here helping him!" '—[*We Have Been Warned*].

Here is the fact:

' Occasionally working men in distant parts of the country who had heard Will Crooks speak or watched his public work would send in their mites, generally anonymous. One such contribution, sent in during the Woolwich by-election, consisted of four penny stamps, stuck on a torn piece of dirty paper, on which were written the words :

Will you please except four stamps towards the expens of will Crooks election and may god bless him in being successful in winning the seat for Labour.

from a working man.'

[*From Workhouse to Westminster. The Life Story of Will Crooks, M.P.*, by George Haw, 1911].

This is fiction:

' She paid a visit to ex-Councillor Finch's elder daughter Dorothy, who was married and living down there—and on the Means Test. She was a jolly, intelligent girl, with a young baby. When Dione came in she apologised for the smell—Dione had always hoped you didn't notice it if you lived there—saying it usedn't to be so bad, but they'd had to sell the lino off the floors and now there was nothing but the bare quarries, much worn from earlier tenants. " I scrub and scrub," the girl said, " but I can't seem to get the smell away. The suds go down the cracks between the quarries, Mrs. Galton ; they aren't properly mortared in, and there isn't any foundations, like. And there's always a draught under the door, and they're that cold to walk on. And now there's the beetles. If we'd known how it would be, Bill and me wouldn't never have got married, but he thought he'd got a steady job—he'd been four years at the Synthex works—and now there's baby and I don't know how ever I shall manage!"

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She began to cry bitterly, seeing it all as she said it, and Dione sat beside her and petted her, and by and by asked a few leading questions. There was one practical thing to be done: the next day she and Dorothy went over to the Sallington birth-control clinic ' etc.—[*We Have Been Warned*].

This is fact:

' When I got better, I went to work at Christie's Hat Works in a lovely room, six stories up, with big windows and a splendid view of the hills. We had to be at work by 7 a.m., and you could see the day break over the hills, and they are always such a comfort and help . . . We were working hard all day, bringing work home and working until eight or nine o'clock at nights for 13/- or 15/- per week, so I left and went to work at Lees and Hatconk's. I wish you could have seen that workroom. It had been built for a warehouse, thick glass windows and a tank of water on the roof which leaked. The room was low, and when the lights were lit it was awful, damp streaming down the walls. Still we had some good times. I worked with a Conservative, an Irish girl, and some Radicals and Socialists, and we used to have full dress debates. When we began someone would call " Parliament is now sitting " (this is thirty years ago), and we would discuss everything. I remember once, after I was married, the Irish girl came one Monday and said: " Nellie, the priest said last night all married people who had no children would go to hell," and I retorted: " I should think I deserved to go to hell if I had brought some of the children into the world I have seen." . . . I always remember going down a street lined with great mills on either side and hoping I should never have to bring a child into the world if it was condemned to that life, for I reasoned: If I were asked to work in one of these mills (for I hate machinery) I should hate it, and I have no right to bring anyone else if this is all we can offer it, because I should love it too much to give it such a life.'—[*Life As We Have Known It*, ' A Felt Hat Worker.'].

Such comparisons might be multiplied. It is not merely that these novelists evidently have no first-hand experience of the kind of life and the kind of feelings they are trying to reproduce ; it is

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often the artist's business to communicate what he may have experienced in imagination only. There is of course the absence of that knowledge which forms the basis of imaginative insight, so that when Mrs. Williams-Ellis wishes for instance to present a well-known type of working-class housewife she has to do so in such poor terms as ' " Mum's keen on the Co-op," ' leaving it to the reader to provide for himself such a background as: ' The house we lived in during our early married life was 5/- per week. In those days I made 18/6 per week, and kept the house going after my rent was deducted. I had my family quickly, and my dividend helped me over these times, and paid the doctor's bill. In fact I do not know how I could have managed without it, as I have always been determined to keep free from debt,' and: ' I attended the Guild Annual Meeting, which was a revelation. I had longings and aspirations and a vague idea of power within myself which had never had an opportunity of realisation. At the close of the Meetings I felt as I imagine a War Horse must feel when he hears the beat of the drums.' [*Life As We Have Known It*, Extracts from Guildswomen's Letters].

What seems really disabling to the impartial reader, who may have left-wing sympathies to begin with, is the attitude of these novelists to their material, and it is the accent with which they write that sounds so fatally wrong in one's ear. I do not mean merely that Mrs. Mitchison for instance, as is obvious from the extracts above, smears everything she handles with a nauseating brand of sentimentality, so that revolutionary feeling is for her bound up with an incessant kissing and pawing between and among the sexes (her Utopia is open to the objection that Saintsbury or someone made to Browning's idea of Heaven, that it is a place where everyone sits on everyone else's lap). There is something far more radically wrong. In neither of these novelists can one find any trace of humility. To most of us, it may be assumed, a woman who has brought up several children decently and kept a family sound and united on anything less than sixty shillings a week is an object of profound respect—for a variety of reasons, such as that her life represents a daily triumph over harsh circumstances and that she shares the quality common to a class, a quality to which Mrs. Woolf, an artist, reacted readily. To Mrs. Williams-Ellis, however, she seems to be no more than a symbol

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of capitalist exploitation, while to Mrs. Mitchison she only means reflections of the ' How horrible to have to live in such poky little rooms . . . Silly of her not to have found out about contraception ' type. To both, as to *Punch*, she is a member of an alien order whose speech requires the forbearance of a conventional spelling or idiom and is lacking in the finer articulateness of the public-school class. Mrs. Woolf, at the Congress of the Women's Co-operative Guild, was moved to reflect, ' How many words must lurk in those women's vocabularies that have faded from ours! What images and saws and proverbial sayings must still be current with them that have never reached the surface of print, and very likely they still keep the power which we have lost of making new ones.' The power of D. H. Lawrence's writings is not merely that of genius ; or, rather, the individual genius drew power from a rich environment—from that culture which Mrs. Williams-Ellis denies the English worker to have possessed.[1] Neither Mrs. Mitchison nor Mrs. Williams-Ellis has taken the trouble to acquaint herself with this aspect of working-class culture and character.

But if left-wing novelists do not concern themselves fundamentally with the nature of the working-class culture, they can do no more for their cause than the statistician ; and if, in obedience to the ideology of a political party, they deny that such a culture has ever existed, they are helping to deprive the English workers of the cultural heritage which their ancestors heroically earned. Because, thanks to such disruptive forces as the loud-speaker, the cinema and the Press, that culture is threatened with extinction ; it is chiefly among the older generation that the tradition survives. It is not yet true, as Mrs. Williams-Ellis asserts, that the English worker is culturally in the position of the Russian worker at the time of the Revolution, it will not be true until the memory of that tradition dies out, and it is therefore important that the memory should be kept alive. That is why it seems to some of us that such novelists are, as I have said, not doing the workers a service. When you look back at this working-class tradition and bear in mind Cecil Sharp's observation about the ' supreme cultural value of an inherited tradition,' it seems a pity

[1] A valuable account of this environment has recently appeared: *D. H. Lawrence*, by E.T. (Cape, 5/-).

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to throw that away on the chance of something more satisfactory emerging from such a social order and such values as are implicit in Mrs. Mitchison's 'Under the Red Flag.' The English working-class culture was based upon the family and transmitted by it; in the community desiderated by these novelists the interests of the adults are monopolized by machine-tending and machine-designing: the young are handed over to the State as soon after birth as practicable.

To deny the workers values as civilized as those you yourself possess is a preliminary to thrusting your own upon them. So Mrs. Mitchison wants for them the joys of the Bloomsbury studio-party and Mrs. Williams-Ellis wants them to have high-powered cars and both want for them the right to be promiscuous without inhibitions. Whether these and what they symbolize are the kind of satisfactions the solider element of the English working-class have wanted up till now is another matter. Even Mrs. Mitchison confesses to some discouragement in this respect:

> 'Every now and then she would come up sharply against something very trying, most often among the women—a kind of idea that the new millennium would mean more and better Co-ops, everyone with a five-roomed house and vegetable garden of their own and earning £5 a week. She went round one evening and talked to Reuben Goldberg about it. He was gloomy: "There's not ten per cent of the Labour Party here who're class-conscious," he said. "I don't mind telling you I had a look at the I.L.P., but half of them are no better."'
> [*We Have Been Warned*, p. 390].

Put like this however it does not perhaps impress as the utterly contemptible and unworthy aspiration that Mrs. Mitchison implies:

> 'At the time my fifth boy was born, my husband was having 26/6 a week to keep us all, and no children at work. I have seen the day when my white tablecloth and clean empty pots were waiting for father to bring his wages, before we could have something to eat, for I would not go to a little shop as I got better value for my money at the Co-operative Society, and there was something at the end of the quarter for clothes. I was feeling myself after my eldest boy began to work for 5/- per week. When the next came to work for another 5/-, and

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the next went out with newspapers, while the fourth boy, only young, delivered milk, I began to get on my feet, and with making all their clothes it was a great help. It was then I determined to let them have music-lessons in their turn. I am glad to think now that we did our best for our children. I have gone without my dinner for their sakes, and just had a cup of tea and bread and butter.

Our ideas for our children was to give them the best education, a trade and music, that we could afford, so that they would grow up to be clean, honest and truthful, and to go straight in life and become good citizens. Each boy as he became 14 years of age, was put to a trade of his own choosing. Between the father and the five boys we had almost every musical instrument there was, excelling in trombone, piano and violin. Reggie was an excellent violinist, having passed many exams. . . . There was the Women's Co-operative Guild, to which I owe a great deal for my education . . . I joined the Suffrage, because having had such a hard and difficult life myself, I thought I would do all I could to relieve the sufferings of others.'—[*Life As We Have Known It*, ' A Plate-Layer's Wife '].

It may be that the kind of family life implied in the second of these extracts will have to go and even that it is desirable that it should go ; certainly I wish to make it clear that I am not trying to justify, on the ground that they thus made possible something admirable, the economic conditions which have made the lives of a large section of the community a bitter struggle. I only wish to suggest that the spiritual temper of the second extract is so much finer than that of the first that it exposes the ' advanced ' writer's attitude, in its obtuseness and uncomprehending ignorance, as impertinent. The ideals and beliefs of a whole group of people with extreme left-wing opinions seem to lay themselves open to this charge, nor do they appear to have anything more worthy to offer in place of what they are so complacently ready to sweep away.

From this point of view the attitude of such writers to the working-class is seen to be in effect that of Hannah More, even though her ' Stories for Persons in the Middle Ranks ' and ' Tales for the Common People ' were written with an opposite intention. The workers received decidedly more intelligent treatment at the

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hands of Mrs. Gaskell, and one can perhaps see why by inspecting the second chapter of her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* ; that character of the people of Haworth is a remarkable document to have emanated from the pen of a lady. It looks as though being a lady was not always and necessarily disabling. Nor being a gentleman ; the exact antithesis of the attitude to the working-class that I have been considering is provided by Cecil Sharp. With no political or even cultural axe to grind, starting only from the musician's respect for the quality of the folk-songs he devoted his leisure to collecting, he was led to extend his respect to the folk-singers and all that they stood for. The process is recorded in his *English Folk-Song : Some conclusions* (1907). He was eventually able to produce evidence of a whole popular culture that but for him would have disappeared from the life of England without leaving traces by which even the archæologist could piece it together. His virtues seem to have been threefold: he was completely unsentimental, he was intelligent enough to perceive that all cultural questions involve complex issues, and, as his singers are known to have observed, he was ' so common.'

I hope to pursue the questions relative to working-class culture touched on here in a future article on *Culture and Education* from a purely historical point of view.

Q. D. Leavis.

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'INTELLIGENT IDEALS OF URBAN LIFE'[1]

IN all matters of social organization one finds two conflicting lines of approach: on the one hand the resort to temporary measures to secure those improvements that are most urgently needed ; on the other the planning of a constructive policy which takes the long view. Nowhere does the difference between the two approaches appear more concretely than in urban development. A study of the organization of urban development is therefore at least as profitable from the general social as from the technical point of view. Or, more accurately, it is only through being treated as part of the problem of social organization that questions of urban development will be seen in their full significance, and be given the widespread attention which they merit. Building a town is not a circumscribed technical matter but an immensely important part of the work of social organization. This book aims at setting the problem of urban development within its wide context of social life. The anonymous ex-Service man J47485 has put forward a proposal for building a hundred new towns for five million people in Great Britain, and an association has been formed to further the project. It is a project that has great merits but also fundamental defects. Nevertheless it deserves the fullest attention ; for it is symptomatic of what is taking place in this sphere.

The project is based on the following facts:

Each year in Great Britain new factories are built capable of employing 75,000 people (figures for 1929). It is also known that, on the average, in a town of 50,000 inhabitants 7,500 would be employed in productive work. If, therefore, this industrial expansion were directed according to a uniform plan a hundred new towns, each of 50,000 inhabitants, could be built in ten years.

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[1] *A Hundred New Towns for Great Britain. A scheme of national reconstruction, proposed by J47485 (Agents, Simpkin Marshall, 2/6).*

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Further it is known that if housing of a reasonable standard is to be provided for everybody in Great Britain new accommodation is required for 5,000,000 people.

At present this expansion is left to look after itself. It goes on everywhere in the form either of haphazard extensions to existing towns or of unorganized building along the main exits from the towns—' ribbon development.'

As a result the layout of the towns is technically unsatisfactory and therefore uneconomic. The situation of the factories becomes unfavourable for transport, extension of premises and so on, and we have the congested industrial areas. The situation of the dwellings often means unreasonably long journeys to and from work. All this results moreover in the spoiling of the countryside and the loss of amenities. The author refers to an actual tendency at the present time for industry to move out from the towns, but what is lacking is the planning required in order that this decentralization should result in the formation of new organic communities.

The problem of re-housing the inhabitants after slum-clearance is at present dealt with unsatisfactorily, the chief difficulty being the high cost of land required for re-housing. There is also a tendency for the inhabitants to look for new homes in neighbouring districts which themselves then become new slum areas. Instead, the logical method would be to build new towns *before* the slums are demolished. It then becomes important to localize the new residential areas conveniently in relation to industries. A mere moving of the population to dormitory suburbs as a rule brings such an increase in the cost of travelling to and from work that families have to cut down still further their already meagre allowance for food.

In the building trades upwards of 85 per cent. of the costs of building consist in wages. No other industry can show such a high proportion of wages to total costs. Large scale building therefore implies work for many, and consequently increased purchasing capacity, which in turn leads to greater demand for a large variety of commodities. Practically the whole of industry would be stimulated by an increase in building activity.

It is time to consider the technical aspects of the proposal. New urban units are to be established, of suitable size, suitably

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placed, and forming organic wholes which include industries, housing, etc. These would take the place of satellite towns placed around existing towns which have so far been advocated, but which generally turn out to have been merely *added* as inorganic appendages to the existing towns instead of being self-contained new towns. Most of the lighter industries, the author considers, could be moved to any locality that provides good communications, electric power, labour, etc. The programme, therefore, includes industry as well as housing, and also the administrative and other services required in a town. The size, 50,000 inhabitants, is determined by the aim of making the big towns big enough to form organic wholes but not so big as to become unwieldy.

By means of such planning England can be saved 20,000 miles of ribbon development.

The new towns ought to be of a type intermediate between the sparse villa town and the congested metropolis. On the one hand the author criticizes the very closely-built existing towns: they produce unhealthy living conditions, gloom, and traffic problems. On the other hand he criticizes the sparsely populated villa communities which are neither town nor country.

He has also worked out specimen plans for the towns, with separate zones for industry, housing, administration and shopping, and with a scheme of transport. There are also designs for housing estates which show a few types of terrace houses (chiefly five-roomed) for families, as well as flats for single people, all having either common or private gardens and recreational space in direct communication with the dwelling.

The type of housing selected is decided not only by the considerations already referred to, but also by the following economic argument. In the controversy between the advocates of tenement-blocks and of cottages the champions of the former affirm that the only alternative to tenements is cottages with a maximum of twelve houses per acre. They rightly affirm that since the ground costs between £5,000 and £10,000 per acre or more this sparse building is impossible. In contrast they point out that with tenement-blocks you can obtain upwards of 200 dwellings per acre. They forget, however, to make the same hygienic demands of both types. If that is done it is hardly possible to reach a maximum of more than thirty to thirty-eight dwellings per acre for tenements.

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Moreover the author declares that a flat having an area (including recreational as well as floor space) equal to that of the proposed terrace-houses has been found to cost on the average £100 more to build than the terrace-house. It is therefore not economic to build tenements unless the difference in the cost of land per dwelling is more than £100. It is calculated that tall tenement-blocks are economically preferable to cottages only when the ground costs £9,000 per acre or more.

These economic calculations should receive further examination. Building and town planning produce an extremely involved complex of technical and economic problems. It seems necessary to present alternative proposals side by side, worked out from the point of view of town planning and building technique with thorough comparative calculation of costs, before any definite conclusions in these respects can be drawn.

Finally the author stresses the fact that a town building programme must be on a large scale in order to be efficient. The proposed project is not of extravagant dimensions. It would only absorb half of the population that needs to be re-housed, leaving the other half to be absorbed by the existing towns.

This technical treatment of the problem is in most respects very clear and open-minded. The author attacks his problem as methodically as he might if he were manager of a workshop that needed reorganizing. He offers '*intelligent* ideals of urban life.'

If therefore I admire almost without reservation the author's approach to the *technical* side of the problem, the economic and socio-political side of the scheme are a different matter. Here the project rests on certain assumptions which it is of great interest to examine more closely.

The State must of course direct the vast administrative apparatus required for realizing the plan ; it must also finance the undertaking.

The economic resources required are placed at £1,000,000,000. About half of this amount will be utilized for housing and half for land, roads, factories, shops, etc. The amount does not seem at all disturbing to the author in view of the fact that the country will sooner or later demand the building of these million houses beyond what is included in the government's slum clearance scheme. He thinks that his proposal to build the required dwellings

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where the ground is cheap involves a considerable saving. The undertaking will also provide much employment and in this way decrease the cost of unemployment relief which in 1933 amounted to £150,000,000. It is moreover calculated that a good deal will be built by private enterprise and will not burden the public.

It is not clear, however, what part of the necessary resources is to be provided in subsidies and what is supposed to return normal interest. But the author suggests that a great part of the population of the new towns will have wages that are too low to meet the normal charges of interest and repayment on house mortgages. It seems that large subsidies would be necessary if the working population now living in old houses with fairly low rents were to be moved to new houses of the comparatively high standard proposed here.

As a method of financing the scheme, the author suggests a monetary reform involving the right of the Treasury to create new money on the security of a certain part of the buildings in the hundred new towns. This method would be free from the dangers which ordinary inflation involves because of the unique kind of security offered by buildings compared with other products.

Obviously for this argument to hold good he must postulate that the economic security on which the funding of the new towns is based is sufficient. The security will be measured by the interest that can be returned on the invested capital compared to the current expectation of interest from capital. It is extremely doubtful whether this scheme holds water. Consider that, apart from the capital sunk in subsidies, the new towns will be in an unfavourable position compared with existing towns, since many public properties and services which the latter have already paid for or written off will from the first greatly burden the finances of the new towns. Moreover the credit of the latter will probably not be regarded as so good, and consequently the issue of the special notes will, at least in part, amount to a direct inflation.

It may be objected that because of the possibilities of rationalizing both building and industry in these new towns, which from the first are functionally planned, the costs of both housing and industrial products will be lower. Against this there is the fact that wages, at least on the average, and on a long view, always bear a definite relation to the workers' cost of living, that is to say

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that the allowance for maintaining working capacity is kept as low as the average standard of living will permit. If for instance the cost of living goes down because rents are lower the wages will be correspondingly cut. This is an inevitable characteristic of the capitalist order of production.

Nor does a further rationalization of industry automatically result in lower prices. It is the state of the market, supply and demand, that regulates prices. The advantages of rationalization bring lower prices only in so far as manufacturers find it economically preferable to sell more commodities at a lower price than to sell fewer at a higher price.

An assumption which also seems to me to be doubtful is that vested interests in existing towns and their properties would allow the creation on a really large scale of new, better, and cheaper facilities for industry and the people, since that would naturally endanger the economy of the older towns and make property values fall. The author suggests that public enthusiasm for the national grandeur of the project and delight at the fall of property values would be practically enough. The political power of those who would profit from the realization of the project ' is not negligible.' I permit myself to put a question mark at this point. It is surely a fact, moreover, that the financiers' capital is far too deeply involved in estate investments to enable them to take a serious interest in the realization of the plan. To begin with, the press, dominated by capital, would hardly help to awaken and spread enthusiasm for the proposal but would rather endeavour to repress it from the first. The author's belief that the mere existence of a plan for something ' intensely desirable and physically possible ' should be enough to make capital interested in it exposes a typically technocratic attitude to society. The author suffers from the delusion, especially amongst technicians, that it is reason and the desire to satisfy people's *needs* which are decisive in directing the actions of financiers, instead of *profit*. The American technocrats—who are no longer heard of—were dominated by the same naïve idea.

The possibility of inducing industry to move to the new towns in sufficient force is doubtful. The localization and distribution of industry according to a completely rational plan would require the support of laws that permitted far-reaching interference with

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private freedom of movement. But the author has not considered anything of this kind. It is, moreover, doubtful whether decentralization is in the interests of industry. Industry generally seems to prefer a big labour market at hand which keeps wages down. It prefers to be able to take on and stand off workers according to its needs. This is more difficult the more limited the local labour market is. And the smaller a town is the greater is the strain on its finances—and its principal tax-payer, that is to say industry—in the event of extensive unemployment. On the other hand it hardly seems in the workers' interests for the labour market to be decentralized, because this reduces the possibilities of marketing labour in different industries. In other words, the large town seems to be an automatic product of the capitalist system which it is difficult to change without at the same time attacking the system itself.

It is characteristic of the technocratic attitude which the author represents that a technically radical standpoint is combined with a deliberate rejection of political life and all attempts at the political reorganization of society. The author states that he wants to achieve the greatest possible result with the least possible change in the existing order. This ultimately is his great mistake and justifies us in describing his project as one that offers ' intelligent *ideals* of urban life '—ideals which are not brought into contact, as they must be, with the decisive facts of reality: economic and political actualities. When the author (rightly) reproaches the authorities for their ' tinkering with existing towns ' this criticism can be turned against himself: his own project is no more than an attempt at patching up existing society on a gigantic scale instead of attempting to get to the radical necessity—a revision of the present conditions of property and power.

UNO ÅHRÉN.
(City Architect of Gothenburg).

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TRADITION & BEN JONSON

I hate traditions ;
I do not trust them.—*Ananias*.

RECENT revivals of *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* occasioned some surprise—surprise that they were such good ' theatre.' The general impression seems to have been that in these plays Jonson had, somehow, triumphed over his ' weight of classical learning,' had in fact forgotten it, and provided some very good fun instead of his usual pedantries. It may not be quite fair to the dramatic critics to suggest that their delight at being entertained instead of bored showed how little Jonson is read, but certainly the reception given to those plays implied a still widespread misconception both of Jonson's intrinsic merits and of the extent and kind of his indebtedness to the Classics.

Ben Jonson is a very great poet—more finely endowed, I think, than any who succeeded him in the seventeenth century—and he read deliberately and widely. It was to be expected therefore that the effects of his reading would be in some manner present in his verse. Dryden said of him that he was a learned plagiary of all the ancients: ' you track him everywhere in their snow.' But this, the common view, violently distorts the sense in which Jonson is ' traditional ' ; it not only makes him appear to owe to the Greek and Latin writers a mere accumulation of thoughts and phrases, it completely hides the native springs of his vitality. The ambitious aim of this essay is to correct the perspective.

I.

A study such as this lies largely outside the field of strict literary criticism ; but without a background of criticism to refer to it is impossible to say anything at all, and I propose to begin (without more apology for the indirect approach) by selecting one play and merely trying to explain why I find it admirable. *Sejanus* is chosen not only because it is commonly underrated, but because it is the first play in which Jonson finds his proper scope: the early ' Humour ' plays were mere experiments.

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Although here the typically Jonsonian method is deployed with less subtlety and richness than in, say, *Volpone*, the parallels between this 'tragedy' and the later 'comedies' are obvious and important.

The stuff of the play is the lust of political power and the pettiness that almost inevitably accompanies political greatness. The world with which we are presented is completely evil. Tiberius and Sejanus are equal in cruelty and cunning; Macro, the agent of Sejanus' overthrow is, like others besides the principals, explicitly 'Machiavellian'; the satellites and senators are servile and inconstant; the mob tears the body of the fallen favourite,

> And not a beast of all the herd demands
> What was his crime, or who were his accusers.

The 'good' characters are choric and denunciatory merely, representing no positive values. How carefully anything that might bring into play sympathetic feelings is excluded is seen in the treatment of Agrippina; the meeting of her adherents, for example, is described (II, ii) in terms that reduce it to a gathering of fractious gossips. And this exclusion operates in the smallest details—in Tiberius' remark about dedicating

> A pair of temples, one to Jupiter
> At Capua; th'other at Nola to Augustus,

or in Sejanus' contempt for 'all the throng that fill th'Olympian hall.'

But in drama substance and criticism of that substance are inseparable, and the world of *Sejanus* exists only in the light of a particular vision. The most obvious device for determining the angle of presentation is found in the vein of farce that runs throughout: there is a violent juxtaposition of contrasts. After the heroics of Sejanus' 'love-making' Livia turns to her physician:

> How do I look today?
> *Eudemus.* Excellent clear, believe it, This same fucus
> Was well laid on.
> *Livia.* Methinks 'tis here not white.
> *Eudemus.* Lend me your scarlet lady. 'Tis the sun
> Hath giv'n some little taint unto the ceruse . . .
> [*Paints her cheek.*

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Here, and in the other scenes of stylized farce (for instance, V, iii, or V, vii, where the secret is passed round) there are obvious theatrical possibilities. Perhaps the most effective scene would be the last, where the senators first cluster round Sejanus—indicating by their verbal *feu de joie* the kind of stylization demanded—then edge away as the drift of Tiberius' riddling letter becomes clear, leaving only Haterius, kept ' most miserably constant ' by his gout. But the whole of the last act, with its controlled confusion leading swiftly to an exciting climax, would act well ; and for more subtle dramatic play we can turn to the scene (III, ii) where Tiberius and Sejanus manœuvre against each other under cover of friendship ; the variations gain from the surface rigidity of the characters.

The essential Jonsonian mode, however, is determined by something more fundamental than the separable elements of farce: it is determined by the verse—a dramatic medium in which exaggeration is controlled by a pervasively implicit sardonic mood. The exuberance of ' Swell, swell, my joys . . . ' (V, i) is followed by,

> . . . 'Tis air I tread ;
> And at each step I feel my advanced head
> Knock out a star in heaven!

It is ' knock out '—the slight twist given to ' sublimi feriam sidera vertice '—that finally determines our attitude. But a longer quotation is in place here. In Act II, Scene ii, Sejanus addresses Drusus in soliloquy:

> Thy follies now shall taste what kind of man
> They have provoked, and this thy father's house
> Crack in the flame of my incensed rage,
> Whose fury shall admit no shame or mean.—
> Adultery! it is the lightest ill
> I will commit. A race of wicked acts
> Shall flow out of my anger, and o'erspread
> The world's wide face, which no posterity
> Shall e'er approve, nor yet keep silent: things
> That for their cunning, close, and cruel mark,
> Thy father would wish his ; and shall, perhaps,
> Carry the empty name, but we the prize.

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> On then, my soul, and start not in thy course ;
> Though heaven drop sulphur, and hell belch out fire,
> Laugh at the idle terrors: tell proud Jove,
> Between his power and thine there is no odds:
> 'Twas only fear first in the world made gods.

In the sentiments, and in the vigorous development of a single dominant impulse there is an obvious resemblance to *Tamburlaine*. But the attitude of sophisticated detachment towards the words, present in those words, suggests what Jonson had learnt from *The Jew of Malta* (a relationship first stated in *The Sacred Wood*): with that play in mind we are not likely to accept Coleridge's verdict of ' absurd rant and ventriloquism '—or not as he intended it. It is equally obvious that the speech is not by Marlowe, that in its combination of weight and vigour it looks forward to the finer poetry of *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*.

The means by which Jonson achieves that combination are here immediately apparent. The alliteration not only adds to the general critical-exaggerative effect, it secures the maximum of direct attention for each word.

> Sleep,
> Voluptuous Cæsar, and security
> Seize on thy stupid powers.—

More generally, we may say that whereas the auditory qualities of Shakespeare's verse arouse a vibrating responsiveness, help to create a fluid medium in which there is the subtlest interplay, the corresponding qualities in Jonson cause the words to separate rather than to coalesce. (' Separate,' of course, is only a way of laying the stress.) Everything is said deliberately—though there is no monotony in the varying rhythm—and, following Jonson's own precepts for ' a strict and succinct style,'[1] with the greatest economy. The economy of course is not Shakespeare's. There are no overlaying meanings or shifts of construction ; the words gain their effect by their solidity, weight and unambiguous directness of expression. How poetically effective that weighted style can be is demonstrated again and again in the present play.

[1] *Discoveries*, cxxix.

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There be two,
Know more than honest counsels ; whose close breasts,
Were they ripp'd up to light, it would be found
A poor and idle sin, to which their trunks
Had not been made fit organs. These can lie,
Flatter, and swear, forswear, deprave, inform,
Smile, and betray ; make guilty men ; then beg
The forfeit lives, to get their livings ; cut
Men's throats with whisperings . . .

Jonson's metaphors and similes tend to fall into one of three classes. Many, perhaps the majority, are straightforwardly descriptive. (' Metaphors far-fet,' he said, ' hinder to be understood.')

—The way to put
A prince in blood, is to present the shapes
Of dangers greater than they are, like late
Or early shadows.

Did those fond words
Fly swifter from thy lips, than this my brain,
This sparkling forge, created me an armour
T'encounter chance and thee?[1]

A second class is formed by those metaphors that, like the ' race of wicked acts . . . ' in Sejanus' soliloquy, heighten the effect of caricature. But Jonson's most striking figures are magnificently derogatory.

Gods! how the sponges open and take in,
And shut again! look, look! is not he blest
That gets a seat in eye-reach of him? more
That comes in ear, or tongue-reach? O but most
Can claw his subtile elbow, or with a buz
Fly-blow his ears?

---

[1]This second image is bright and clear, but its surface quality is emphasized if we put beside it the line from *Henry V*,

In the quick forge and working-house of thought,

where the rhythm, the double meaning of ' quick ' and the fused impression of swift movement and ordered labour evokes a far more complex activity of the mind.

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Jonson's triumph, we have been told, is a triumph of consistency, and the habit of mind behind this last quotation provides the dominant tone of the play. I have already commented on the exclusion of irrelevant moods and associations, and there only remains to notice the characteristic linking together of words that usually invite sympathy or admiration with those demanding an exactly contrary response.

> Like, as both
> *Their bulks and souls* were bound on Fortune's wheel . . .
>
> He . . . gives Cæsar leave
> To hide his *ulcerous and anointed* face . . .[1]

One does not need to look up the various suggestions of weight and clumsiness under ' cob ' in the Oxford Dictionary to feel the effect of ' a cob-swan, or a high mounting bull ' in the most famous speech from *Catiline*.

It should be plain by now that the appreciation of Jonson starts from the appreciation of his verse. It could start from nothing else ; but it does not seem to be realized how clogging are the discussions of ' humours ' which, in histories of English literature, fill up the pages on Jonson. His plays have the tightness and coherence of a firmly realized purpose, active in every detail, and a commentary on Jonson's technical achievements—the weight and vigour of his verse, the intensive scrutiny that it invites—is only one way of indicating his essential qualities.

II.

Sejanus, like the other greater plays, is the product of a unique vision ; but in stressing the uniqueness one has to avoid any suggestion of the idiosyncratic. It is not merely that the matter on which the poet works is provided by the passions, lusts and impulses of the actual world, the firmly defined individual spirit which moulds that matter springs from a rich traditional wisdom ; it relies, that is to say, on something outside itself, and presupposes an active relationship with a particular audience.

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[1]That the corresponding phrase in Tacitus is, ' Facies ulcerosa ac plerumque *medicaminibus interstincta*,' is, I think, irrelevant.

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The point can be made by examining a passage that is commonly recognized as ' great poetry.'

> See, behold,
> What thou art queen of ; not in expectation,
> As I feed others: but possess'd and crown'd.
> See, here, a rope of pearl ; and each more orient
> Than that the brave Ægyptian queen caroused:
> Dissolve and drink them. See, a carbuncle,
> May put out both the eyes of our St. Mark ;
> A diamond, would have bought Lollia Paulina,
> When she came in like star-light, hid with jewels,
> That were the spoils of provinces ; take these,
> And wear, and lose them: yet remains an ear-ring
> To purchase them again, and this whole state.
> A gem but worth a private patrimony,
> Is nothing: we will eat such at a meal.
> The heads of parrots, tongues of nightingales,
> The brains of peacocks, and of estriches,
> Shall be our food: and, could we get the phœnix,
> Though nature lost her kind, she were our dish.

Mr. Palmer, supporting a general thesis that Jonson ' wrote for a generation which had still an unbounded confidence in the senses and faculties of man. England had not yet accepted the great negation . . . ,' remarks that ' In the figure of Volpone Jonson presents the splendours of his theme. Was ever woman so magnificently wooed as the wife of Corvino?'[1] This is to miss the point completely. The poetic force of Volpone's wooing has two sources. There is indeed an exuberant description of luxury—' Temptations are heaped upon temptations with a rapidity which almost outstrips the imagination '—and the excited movement seems to invite acceptance. But at the same time, without cancelling out the exuberance, the luxury is ' placed.' We have only to compare passages (from the early Keats, for example) in which the imagined gratification of sight, taste and touch is intended as an indulgence merely, to see how this placing is achieved. It is not merely that the lines quoted have a context of other swelling speeches (com-

[1] *Ben Jonson*, pp. x and 175.

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pare *Sejanus*), so that by the time we reach them the mode is established, the exaggeration, which comes to a climax at 'phœnix,' is itself sufficient to suggest some qualification of Mr. Palmer's ' splendours.' The verse demands the usual scrupulous inspection of each word—we are not allowed to lapse into an impression of generalized magnificence—and the splendours, in ' caroused,' ' spoils of provinces,' ' private patrimony,' are presented clearly enough as waste. ' Though nature lost her kind,' at least, implies a moral judgment ; and the references to Lollia Paulina and Heliogabalus (Gifford quotes, ' Comedit linguas pavonum et lusciniarum ')—which would not be unfamiliar to an Elizabethan audience—are significant.

The manner of presentation (relying on a response which later criticism shows is neither obvious nor easy) suggests that the double aspect of the thing presented corresponds to a double attitude in the audience: a naïve delight in splendour is present *at the same time* as a clear-sighted recognition of its insignificance judged by fundamental human, or divine, standards. The strength of this attitude is realized if we compare it with a puritanic disapproval of ' the world ' on the one hand, or a sensuous abandonment on the other. It is the possession of this attitude that makes Jonson ' classical,' not his Greek and Latin erudition. His classicism is an equanimity and assurance that springs—' here at home '[1]—from the strength of a native tradition.

For Jonson's knowledge, and use, of the native literary tradition there is, I believe, evidence of the usually accepted kind. One could consider his references (explicit and otherwise) to earlier poets and prose-writers from Chaucer onwards ; his avowed interest in the *Vetus Comœdia* ;[2] the obvious ' morality ' influence in such plays as *The Devil is an Ass* and *The Magnetic Lady* ; the popular source of the jog-trot rhythms used for Nano, Androgyno and the Vice, Iniquity. But when we are dealing with a living tradition such terms are hopelessly inadequate, and exploration can be more profitably directed, in the manner

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[1]And make my strengths, such as they are,
Here in my bosom, and at home.
A Farewell to the World.

[2]English, not Roman. See *Conversations*, 16.

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suggested by the analysis above, towards Jonson's handling of his main themes, lust and the desire for wealth and their accompanying vanities.

In *The Devil is an Ass* the satire is more than usually direct. But the play provides more than a succession of satiric comments on the first period of intensive capitalistic activity in England ; it formulates an attitude towards acquisition. The word ' formulates ' is used advisedly. The outlook is a particular one, is Jonson's own ; but it is clear that the satire presupposes certain general attitudes in the audience, and that it builds on something that is already there. Fitzdottrel, immersed in his schemes for making money, believes that he has surprised his wife making love with Wittipol, and (II, iii) reproaches her:

> O, bird,
> Could you do this? ' gainst me! and at this time now!
> When I was so employ'd, wholly for you,
> Drown'd in my care (more than the land, I swear,
> I have hope to win) to make you peerless, studying
> For footmen for you, fine-pace huishers, pages,
> To serve you on the knee . . .
> You've almost turn'd my good affection to you ;
> Sour'd my sweet thoughts, all my pure purposes . . .

Fitzdottrel is an ass and it is quite unnecessary to say that there is not a hint of pathos, though it is easy to imagine the temptations of a nineteenth century novelist in such a scene. (Compare the exaggerated significance that is given to Mrs. Dombey's jewels—' She flung it down and trod upon the glittering heap ' etc.). The point is that Jonson evidently relies upon his audience immediately despising those ' pure purposes ' ; what these are—the way in which the money acquired would be employed—is magnificently brought out in the Tailbush-Eitherside scene (IV, i.—' See how the world its veterans rewards . . . '). It is, of course, the tone and manner of presentation that is commented on here. As one learns to expect, that tone is consistent throughout and one has to be alive to its implications even in the smallest particulars. The ' Spanish lady ' is

> such a mistress of behaviour,
> She knows from the duke's daughter to the doxy
> What is their due just, and no more.

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Here the scornful alliteration acts as a leveller (we have seen something similar in *Sejanus*): Jonson, that is, takes his stand on a scheme that shows duke's daughter and doxy in proper perspective. It was not merely that Jonson as an individual 'never esteemed of a man for the name of a Lord';[1] his values were a part of the national life. We have only to turn up Bunyan's account of By-End's ancestry and connections: 'My wife . . . came of a very honourable family, and is arrived to such a pitch of breeding, that she knows how to carry it to all, even to prince and peasant.' The tone and method are identical.[2]

In *The Devil is an Ass*, in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist* Jonson is drawing on an anti-acquisitive tradition inherited from the middle ages. But this account is too narrow; the tradition included more than a mere distrust of, or hostility towards, riches. Understanding is, perhaps, best reached by studying (with Volpone in mind) the speeches of Sir Epicure Mammon. Each of them, it seems to me, implicitly refers to a traditional conception of 'the Mean.' Mammon, wooing Doll, describes their teeming pleasures:

> and with these
> Delicate meats set our selves high for pleasure,
> And take us down again, and then renew
> Our youth and strength with drinking the elixir,
> And so enjoy a perpetuity
> Of life and lust! And thou shalt have thy wardrobe
> Richer than nature's, still to change thy self,
> And vary oftener, for thy pride, than she.

The reference to 'nature,' which gives the proper angle on 'a perpetuity of life and lust,' is important. The accepted standard is

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[1]*Conversations*, 14. I know that Jonson was capable of writing fulsome dedications; but before we make much of that charge we need to enquire, in each instance, the grounds of his praises. Many of the Elizabethan aristocracy had a decent sense of responsibility, literary and other.

[2]Dr. G. R. Owst's *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (pp. 97-109) gives an admirable account of the long popular and religious tradition behind Bunyan, reinforcing the conclusions that one would draw from reading *The Pilgrim's Progress* itself.

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'natural,' and although exact definition would not be easy we may notice the part played by that standard throughout Jonson's work. An instance from *Volpone* has been quoted. Mammon's folly is that he expects Subtle to

> teach dull nature
> What her own forces are.

Similarly in the masque, *Mercury Vindicated*, the alchemists 'pretend . . . to commit miracles in art and treason against nature . . . a matter of immortality is nothing'; they 'profess to outwork the sun in virtue, and contend to the great act of generation, nay almost creation.' The obviously expected response is similar to that given to the description of Mammon's jewels whose light shall 'strike out the stars': Who wants to strike out the stars, anyway?

The Staple of News, that odd combination of morality play and topical revue, is generally spoken of as a 'dotage'; but, apart from the admirably comic Staple scenes, it contains passages of unusual power, and all of these, we notice, are informed by the same attitude. In a speech of Pennyboy Senior's the anti-acquisitive theme (the play is mainly directed against the abuse of 'the Venus of our time and state, Pecunia') is explicitly related to the conception of a natural mean:

> Who can endure to see
> The fury of men's gullets, and their groins?
> . . . . . What need hath nature
> Of silver dishes, or gold chamber-pots?
> Of perfumed napkins, or a numerous family
> To see her eat? poor, and wise, she requires
> Meat only; hunger is not ambitious:
> Say, that you were the emperor of pleasures,
> The great dictator of fashions, for all Europe,
> And had the pomp of all the courts, and kingdoms,
> Laid forth unto the shew, to make yourself
> Gazed and admired at; you must go to bed,
> And take your natural rest: then all this vanisheth.
> Your bravery was but shown; twas not possest:
> While it did boast itself, it was then perishing.

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With more space than is available here it would be easy to fill in the background that all these passages imply. That a sense of the mean, an acceptance of natural limitations, was a part of the inheritance of Jonson and his contemporaries, could be demonstrated from medieval and sixteenth century sermons and the writings of moralists. But it was not something imposed from above ; it sprang from the wisdom of the common people (I am aware of the obvious Marxist retort), and it was only indirectly that it found its way into writing.[1] The anti-acquisitive attitude had been more explicitly formulated. It was not only a part of the life of the small local communities of the middle ages, it was the basis of the Canon Law on such subjects as usury. And although the age of Jonson was also the age of Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Arthur Ingram—the disreputable ancestors of more famous captains of industry—it was still, we remember, a commonplace, accepted by the worldly Bacon, that ' The ways to enrich are many, and most of them foul.'[2]

III.

In a well-known passage in *Discoveries* Jonson speaks of following the ancients ' as guides, not commanders ' : ' For to all the observations of the ancients, we have our own experience ; which, if we will use and apply, we have better means to pro-

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[1]Mr. Speirs' essay on ' The Scottish Ballads '—if I may refer to the last number of *Scrutiny*—is decidedly relevant here. There it is remarked, for example, that in the Ballads, ' The images of finery . . . possess a symbolical value as profound as in Bunyan (" . . . he that is clad in Silk and Velvet "). That finery is associated with folly, pride and death. It is Vanity.' The relation between popular thought and medieval sermon literature is brought out by Dr. Owst.

[2]It is probably unnecessary to refer to Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* and his Introduction to Wilson's *Discourse upon Usury*, which show the persistence of traditional economic teaching long after the middle ages. I am developing the meaning and implications of ' the anti-acquisitive tradition,' with special reference to the rapid development of capitalistic activity, in a forthcoming study of *Drama and Society in the Age of Jonson.*

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nounce.'[1] That this was not a mere assertion of independence (or a mere translation—see M. Castelain's learned edition) is shown by every page on which he seems to draw most directly on the classics. Wherever the editors suggest parallels with Horace or Catullus, Tacitus or Suetonius, the re-creation is as complete—to take a modern instance—as Mr. Pound's *Propertius*, so complete as to make the hunt for 'sources' utterly irrelevant. When Fitzdottrel is gloating over the prospect of obtaining an estate on which his descendants shall keep his name alive, Meercraft, characteristically speaking 'out of character,' reminds him of the revolution of the times:

Fitzdottrel. 'Tis true.
DROWN'D LANDS will live in drown'd land.
Meercraft. Yes, when you
Have no foot left; as that must be, sir, one day.
And though it tarry in your heirs some forty,
Fifty descents, the longer liver at last, yet,
Must thrust them out on't, if no quirk in law,
Or odd vice of their own not do it first.
We see those changes daily: the fair lands
That were the client's, are the lawyer's now;
And those rich manors there of goodman Taylor's,
Had once more wood upon them, than the yard
By which they were measured out for the last purchase.
Nature hath these vicissitudes. She makes
No man a state of perpetuity, sir.

Here is the passage in Horace (*Satires*, II, 2) that the speech 'derives' from:

nam propriae telluris erum natura neque illum
nec me nec quemquam statuit: nos expulit ille;
illum aut nequities aut vafri inscitia iuris,
postremum expellet certe vivacior heres.

Even in the lines that come nearest to translation there is a complete transmutation of idiom: 'nequities' has become 'some odd vice,' and 'ignorance of the subtle law,' the sardonically familiar

[1] *Discoveries*, xxi, *Non nimium credendum antiquitati.*

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'quirk in law.' But as Horace is left behind the presence of everyday life is felt even more immediately, in 'daily,' 'those rich manors there' and 'goodman Taylor's,' followed as these are by a kind of country wit about the yardstick. The strength of the passage—it is representative—lies in the interested but critical inspection of a familiar world.

In pointing to the idiom we are of course noticing very much more than 'local colour'; we are noticing ways of thought and perception. Jonson's idiom—his vocabulary, turns of phrase and general linguistic habits—might form a study in itself. It was Coleridge who spoke of 'his sterling English diction'—which seems a sufficient rejoinder to the description, 'ponderous Latinism,' applied by a recent anthologist of the seventeenth century. It is easy, as Gifford pointed out, to exaggerate the extent of Jonson's latinized formations when we forget the similar experimenting of his contemporaries. (And it was not Jonson who tried to introduce 'lubrical,' 'magnificate,' 'ventosity' and the rest). But whereas these have had too much attention, a more striking characteristic has had none. Important as Jonson was as a formative influence on the Augustan age, his English is not 'polite'; it is, very largely, the popular English of an agricultural country. It is not merely a matter of vocabulary—'ging' [gang], 'threaves,' 'ding it open': one could go on collecting—his inventive habits are of a kind that can still be paralleled in country life. There is the delighted recognition of those elements of caricature that man or nature supplies ready made: 'It is now such a time . . . that every man stands under the eves of his own hat, and sings what pleases him.' There are those derisive compounds: 'honest, plain, livery-three-pound-thrum.' There is a predilection for alliterative jingles:

> You shall be soaked, and stroked, and tubb'd and rubb'd,
> And scrubb'd, and fubb'd, dear don.

And if this kind of clowning is thought unworthy of serious criticism we can point to the easy alliterative run of 'the tip, top, and tuft of all our family,' or half the speeches quoted from *Sejanus*. But even the pleasantries reveal a natural bent, and the boisterous coining of nicknames—'His great Verdugoship'—was more than a rustic habit; 'Old Smug of Lemnos,' Bombast of

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Hohenhein ' [Vulcan and Paracelsus] indicate an attitude, similar to Nashe's,[1] of familiar disrespect towards text-book worthies. And the amazing fertility that reveals itself now in a popular fluency

> —our Doll, our castle, our cinque port,
> Our Dover pier—

now in Volpone's mountebank oration, now in Mammon's description of luxury, is an index of a native vigour that we recognize as ' typically Elizabethan.' The more we study Jonson in minute detail the more clearly he appears both intensely individual and—the paradox is justifiable—at one with his contemporaries.

IV.

The speech last quoted from *The Devil is an Ass* has a further significance ; it represents an outlook that is present even in such pure entertainment as *The Silent Woman* (see Truewit on Time in I, i), and that combines easily with hilarious comedy, as in Volpone's ludicrously inadequate modesty:

> *Mosca.* That, and thousands more,
> I hope to see you lord of.
> *Volpone.* Thanks, kind Mosca.
> *Mosca.* And that, when I am lost in blended dust,
> And hundred such as I am in succession—
> *Volpone.* Nay, that were too much, Mosca.

Meercraft's speech, that is, forms part of the permanent sombre background of which we are made aware in all of Jonson's comedies. But the insistence on mortality has the very opposite effect of the introduction of a death's head at a feast ; it is not for the sake of a gratuitous thrill.

> Nature hath these vicissitudes. She makes
> No man a state of perpetuity, sir.

It is the tone—the quiet recognition of the inevitable—that is important ; and the clearly apprehended sense of mutability

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[1] ' The gods and goddesses all on a row, bread and crow, from Ops to Pomona, the first applewife, were so dumpt with this miserable wrack . . . '—*Nashe's Lenten Stuff*.

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heightens, rather than detracts from, the prevailing zest.

It is here, I think, that a genuine 'classical influence,' or at least, the influence of Horace, can be traced.

> iam Cytherea choros ducit Venus imminente luna,
> iunctaeque Nymphis Gratiae decentes
> alterno terram quatiunt pede . . .
>
> pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede pauperum tabernas
> regumque turris.

The potency of the evocation of the nymphs' flying feet is not lessened because they are also the feet of Time. But even here it is plain that the Jonsonian attitude is not acquired but inherited. There is no need to stress the medieval and sixteenth century insistence on wormy circumstance (a good deal of it was pathological), but we need to keep in mind the way in which, in the popular literature of those periods, death and life are vividly juxtaposed.

And the ability to see life under two opposed aspects simultaneously was part of the natural equipment of the poets of the seventeenth century before the Restoration. It is expressed in Marvell, in the recognition of conflicting claims in the *Horatian Ode*, in the concluding lines of *The Coy Mistress*:

> And tear our pleasures with rough strife
> Through the Iron gates of Life.

The aspects of experience represented by 'the Iron gates' would hardly be present in a nineteenth century 'love poem,' or, if present, would have a totally different intention and effect. It was in connection with Marvell, we remember, that Mr. Eliot defined Wit: 'It involves . . . a recognition, implicit in the expression of every experience, of other kinds of experience which are possible.' Jonson had not a metaphysic wit and he was not Donne, but it is a similar recognition, implicit or explicit, of the whole range of human life, that explains his tough equilibrium.

How little a mere classicizing can produce that equilibrium a final comparison may show. When Jonson's verse seems to catch an Horatian inflexion it is not because he has assumed it;

> dum loquimur, fugerit invida
> aetas

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becomes, quite naturally,

> think,
> All beauty doth not last until the autumn:
> You grow old while I tell you this.

On the other hand there is Landor.

> occidit et Pelopis genitor, conviva deorum,
> Tithonusque remotus in auras . . .
>
> . . . sed omnis una manet nox,
> et calcanda semel via leti.

> 'Laodameia died; Helen died; Leda, the beloved of Jupiter, went before . . . There is no name, with whatever emphasis of passionate love repeated, of which the echo is not faint at last.'

In this affected mimicry the Horatian tone ('Durum: sed levius fit patientia'), all, in fact, which gives value to the recognition of a common night, has completely evaporated, and we are left with as orotund a piece of self-indulgence as ever found its way into anthologies. Jonson's tone is that of a man who has seen many civilizations, and is at home in one.

I have tried to show that, in Jonson's audience, we may postulate a lively sense of human limitations. When Mammon declared of the elixir that, taken by an old man, it will

> Restore his years, renew him, like an eagle,
> To the fifth age; make him get sons and daughters,
> Young giants; as our philosophers have done,
> The ancient patriarchs, afore the flood,
> But taking, once a week, on a knife's point,
> The quantity of a grain of mustard of it,

they had a right to laugh as our modern seekers after youth have not.[1] But it was not a sense that incapacitated from living in

[1]Gifford quotes Hurd: 'The pursuit so strongly exposed in this play is forgotten, and therefore its humour must appear exaggerated.' It would have pleased Gifford to refute Hurd by quoting from our Sunday newspapers and upper-class periodicals, with their appeals to 'Banish middle age,' etc.

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the present. Jonson's lively interest in every aspect of his environment hardly needs to be illustrated. Meercraft's speech comes from a play which forms the most striking indictment of the newer forms of economic parasitism. Unwin, who was better qualified to speak than most, remarked that ' A study of the leading characters in *The Devil is an Ass* . . . would be by far the best introduction to the economic history of the period.' Everything is there: the projects of the early exponents of self-help ; share-dealing and pickings for the favoured ; devices for obtaining the necessary ' countenance ' of great men ; visits at court to oil the wheels ; society advertising and the first specimen of an advertisement (' a book . . . which every child shall have . . . and learn to pick his teeth by ') designed to bring up the young in the ways of a profit economy.

It would be good to see this play acted ; it would be good to see *Sejanus*—which has a contemporary relevance not merely because it is a study of tyranny (' We shall be marked anon for our not Hail.') ; but it would be better if one could be assured that they were widely read. Jonson's permanent importance is beyond question, but the discipline that a thorough assimilation of his work imposes is an especial need of the present day. It is not merely that poets might profitably study his verse as well as Donne's and Hopkins', Skelton's and *The Seafarer* (I am not suggesting anything so foolish as direct imitation) ; not merely that practitioners of ' the poetic drama ' might learn something of effective stylization (the result of an emotional discipline) from his plays: these matters, in any case, are best left to poets. But for all of us he is one of the main channels of communication with an almost vanished tradition. That tradition cannot be apprehended in purely literary terms, but we can learn something of it through literature, just as to feel our way into the technique of Jonson's verse is to share, in some measure, that steady, penetrating scrutiny of men and affairs.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

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REVALUATIONS (VIII):

SHELLEY

IF Shelley had not received some distinguished attention in recent years (and he has been differed over by the most eminent critics) there might, perhaps, have seemed little point in attempting a restatement of the essential critical observations—the essential observations, that is, in the reading and appreciation of Shelley's poetry. For they would seem to be obvious enough. Yet it is only one incitement out of many when a critic of peculiar authority, contemplating the common change from being 'intoxicated by Shelley's poetry at the age of fifteen' to finding it now 'almost unreadable,' invokes for explanation the nature of Shelley's 'ideas' and, in reference to them, that much-canvassed question of the day, 'the question of belief or disbelief':

> 'It is not so much that thirty years ago I was able to read Shelley under an illusion which experience has dissipated, as that because the question of belief or disbelief did not arise I was in a much better position to enjoy the poetry. I can only regret that Shelley did not live to put his poetic gifts, which were certainly of the first order, at the service of more tenable beliefs—which need not have been, for my purposes, beliefs more acceptable to me.'

This is, of course, a personal statement; but perhaps if one insists on the more obvious terms of literary criticism—more strictly critical terms—in which such a change might be explained, and suggests that the terms actually used might be found unfortunate in their effect, the impertinence will not be unpardonable. It does, in short, seem worth endeavouring to make finally plain that, when one dissents from persons who, sympathizing with Shelley's revolutionary doctrines and with his idealistic ardours and fervours —with his 'beliefs,' exalt him as a poet, it is strictly the 'poetry' one is criticizing. There would also appear to be some reason for insisting that in finding Shelley almost unreadable one need not be committing oneself to a fashionably limited taste—an inability

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to appreciate unfashionable kinds of excellence or to understand a use of words that is unlike Hopkins's or Donne's.

It will be well to start, in fact, by examining the working of Shelley's poetry—his characteristic modes of expression—as exemplified in one of his best poems.

> Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,
> Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
> Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,
>
> Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
> On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,
> Like the bright hair uplifted from the head
>
> Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
> Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
> The locks of the approaching storm.

The sweeping movement of the verse, with the accompanying plangency, is so potent that, as many can testify, it is possible to have been for years familiar with the Ode—to know it by heart—without asking the obvious questions. In what respects are the 'loose clouds' like 'decaying leaves'? The correspondence is certainly not in shape, colour or way of moving. It is only the vague general sense of windy tumult that associates the clouds and the leaves; and, accordingly, the appropriateness of the metaphor 'stream' in the first line is not that it suggests a surface on which, like leaves, the clouds might be 'shed,' but that it contributes to the general 'streaming' effect in which the inappropriateness of 'shed' passes unnoticed. What, again, are those 'tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean'? They stand for nothing that Shelley could have pointed to in the scene before him; the 'boughs,' it is plain, have grown out of the 'leaves' in the previous line, and we are not to ask what the tree is. Nor are we to scrutinize closely the 'stream' metaphor as developed: that 'blue surface' must be the concave of the sky, an oddly smooth surface for a 'surge'—if we consider a moment. But in this poetic surge, while we let ourselves be swept along, there is no considering, the image doesn't challenge any inconvenient degree of realization, and the oddness is lost. Then again, in what ways does the approach of a storm ('loose clouds like earth's decaying

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leaves,' ' like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing ') suggest streaming hair? The appropriateness of the Maenad, clearly, lies in the pervasive suggestion of frenzied onset, and we are not to ask whether her bright hair is to be seen as streaming out in front of her (as, there is no need to assure ourselves, it might be doing if she were running before a still swifter gale: in the kind of reading that got so far as proposing to itself this particular reassurance no general satisfaction could be exacted from Shelley's imagery).

Here, clearly, in these peculiarities of imagery and sense, peculiarities analysable locally in the mode of expression, we have the manifestation of essential characteristics—the Shelleyan characteristics as envisaged by the criticism that works on a philosophical plane and makes judgments of a moral order. In the growth of those ' tangled boughs' out of the leaves, exemplifying as it does a general tendency of the images to forget the status of the metaphor or simile that introduced them and to assume an autonomy and a right to propagate, so that we lose in confused generations and perspectives the perception or thought that was the ostensible *raison d'être* of imagery, we have a recognized essential trait of Shelley's: his weak grasp upon the actual. This weakness, of course, commonly has more or less creditable accounts given of it—idealism, Platonism and so on ; and even as unsentimental a judge as Mr. Santayana correlates Shelley's inability to learn from experience with his having been born a ' nature preformed,' a ' spokesman of the *a priori*,' ' a dogmatic, inspired, perfect and incorrigible creature.'[1] It seems to me that Mr. Santayana's essay, admirable as it is, rates the poetry too high. But for the moment it will be enough to recall limitations that are hardly disputed: Shelley was not gifted for drama or narrative. Having said this, I realize that I had forgotten the conventional standing of *The Cenci* ; but controversy may be postponed: it is at any rate universally agreed that (to shift tactfully to positive terms) Shelley's genius was ' essentially lyrical.'

This predicate would, in common use, imply a special emotional intensity—a vague gloss, but it is difficult to go further without slipping into terms that are immediately privative and limiting. Thus there is certainly a sense in which Shelley's poetry

[1]See the essay on Shelley in *Winds of Doctrine*.

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is peculiarly emotional, and when we try to define this sense we find ourselves invoking an absence of something. The point may be best made, perhaps, by recalling the observation noted above, that one may have been long familiar with the *Ode to the West Wind* without ever having asked the obvious questions ; questions that propose themselves at the first critical inspection. This poetry induces—depends for its success on inducing—a kind of attention that doesn't bring the critical intelligence into play: the imagery feels right, the associations work appropriately, if (as it takes conscious resistance not to do) one accepts the immediate feeling and doesn't slow down to think.

Shelley himself can hardly have asked the questions. Not that he didn't expend a great deal of critical labour upon his verse. 'He composed rapidly and attained to perfection by intensive correction. He would sometimes write down a phrase with alterations and rejections time after time until it came within a measure of satisfying him. Words are frequently substituted for others and lines interpolated.' The *Ode to the West Wind* itself, as is shown in the repository[1] of fragments the preface to which supplies these observations, profited by the process described, which must be allowed to have been in some sense critical. But the critical part of Shelley's creative labour was a matter of getting the verse to feel right, and feeling, for Shelley as a poet, had—as the insistent concern for 'rightness,' the typical final product being what it is, serves to emphasize—little to do with thinking (though Shelley was in some ways a very intelligent man).

We have here, if not sufficient justification for the predicate 'essentially lyrical,' certainly a large part of the reason for Shelley's being found essentially poetical by the succeeding age. He counted, in fact, for a great deal in what came to be the prevailing idea of 'the poetical'—the idea that had its latest notable statement in Professor Housman's recent address. The Romantic conceptions of genius and inspiration[2] developed (the

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[1] *Verse and Prose from the Manuscripts of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. Edited by Sir John C. E. Shelley-Rolls, Bart., and Roger Ingpen (Zaehnsdorf).

[2] See *Four Words* (now reprinted in *Words and Idioms*), by Logan Pearsall Smith.

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French Revolution and its ideological background must, of course, be taken into account) in reaction against the Augustan insistence on the social and the rational. When Wordsworth says that ' all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings ' he is of his period, though the intended force of this dictum, the force it has in its context and in relation to Wordsworth's own practice, is very different from that given it when Shelley assents, or when it is assimilated to Byron's ' poetry is the lava of the imagination, whose eruption prevents an earthquake.'[1] But Byron was for the young Tennyson (and the Ruskin parents)[2] the poet, and Shelley (Browning's ' Sun-treader ') was the idol of the undergraduate Tennyson and his fellow Apostles, and, since the poetry of ' the age of Wordsworth ' became canonical, the assent given to Wordsworth's dictum has commonly been Shelleyan.

The force of Shelley's insistence on spontaneity is simple and unequivocal. It will be enough to recall a representative passage or two from the *Defence of Poetry*:

> ' for the mind in creation is as a fading coal, which some invisible influence, like an inconstant wind, awakes to transitory brightness ; this power arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes as it is developed, and the conscious portions of our nature are unprophetic either of its approach or its departure.'

' Inspiration ' is not something to be tested, clarified, defined and developed in composition,

> ' but when composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been com-

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[1] *Letters and Journals*, ed. R. E. Prothero, vol. iii, p. 405 (1900). (I am indebted for this quotation to Mr. F. W. Bateson's *English Poetry and the English Language*, reviewed in the last *Scrutiny*).

[2] ' His ideal of my future,—now entirely formed in conviction of my genius,—was that I should enter at college into the best society, take all the best prizes every year, and a double first to finish with ; marry Lady Clara Vere de Vere ; write poetry as good as Byron's, only pious ; preach sermons as good as Bossuet's, only Protestant ; be made, at forty, Bishop of Winchester, and at fifty, Primate of England.' *Praeterita*, vol. i, p. 340 (1886).

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> municated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conceptions of the poet . . . The toil and delay recommended by critics can be justly interpreted to mean no more than a careful observation of the inspired moments, and an artificial connexion of the spaces between their suggestions, by the intertexture of conventional expressions ; a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself . . . '

The ' poetical faculty,' we are left no room for doubting, can, of its very nature, have nothing to do with any discipline, and can be associated with conscious effort only mechanically and externally, and when Shelley says that Poetry

> ' is not subject to the control of the active powers of the mind, and that its birth and recurrence have no necessary connexion with consciousness or will '

he is not saying merely that the ' active powers of the mind ' are insufficient in themselves for creation—that poetry cannot be written merely by taking thought. The effect of Shelley's eloquence is to hand poetry over to a sensibility that has no more dealings with intelligence than it can help ; to a ' poetic faculty ' that, for its duly responsive vibrating (though the poet must reverently make his pen as sensitive an instrument as possible to ' observe '—in the scientific sense—the vibrations), demands that active intelligence shall be, as it were, switched off.

Shelley, of course, had ideas and ideals ; he wrote philosophical essays, and it need not be irrelevant to refer, in discussing his poetry, to Plato, Godwin and other thinkers. But there is nothing grasped in the poetry—no object offered for contemplation, no realized presence to persuade or move us by what it is. Dr. A. C. Bradley, remarking that ' Shelley's ideals of good, whether as a character or as a mode of life, resting as they do on abstraction from the mass of real existence, tend to lack body and individuality,' adds: ' But we must remember that Shelley's strength and weakness are closely allied, and it may be that the very abstractness of his ideal was a condition of that quivering intensity of aspiration towards it in which his poetry is unequalled.'[1] That is the best that can be respectably said. Actually, that ' quivering intensity,' offered in itself apart from any substance, offered instead of any object, is what, though it may make Shelley intoxicating

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at fifteen makes him almost unreadable, except in very small quantities of his best, to the mature. Even when he is in his own way unmistakably a distinguished poet, as in *Prometheus Unbound*, it is impossible to go on reading him at any length with pleasure ; the elusive imagery, the high-pitched emotions, the tone and movement, the ardours, ecstasies and despairs, are too much the same all through. The effect is of vanity and emptiness (Arnold was right) as well as monotony.

The force of the judgment that feeling in Shelley's poetry is divorced from thought needs examining further. Any suspicion that Donne is the implied criterion will, perhaps, be finally averted if for the illuminating contrast we go to Wordsworth. Wordsworth is another ' Romantic ' poet ; he too is undramatic ; and he too invites the criticism (Arnold, his devoted admirer, made it) that he lacks variety. ' Thought ' will hardly be found an assertive presence in his best poetry ; in so far as the term suggests an overtly active energy it is decidedly inappropriate. ' Emotion,' his own word, is the word most readers would insist on, though they would probably judge Wordsworth's emotion to be less lyrical than Shelley's. The essential difference, however—and it is a very important one—seems, for present purposes, more relevantly stated in the terms I used in discussing[2] Wordsworth's ' recollection in tranquillity.' The process covered by this phrase was one of emotional discipline, critical exploration of experience, pondered valuation and maturing reflection. As a result of it an organization is engaged in Wordsworth's poetry, and the activity and standards of critical intelligence are implicit.

An associated difference was noted in the sureness with which Wordsworth grasps the world of common perception. The illustration suggested was *The Simplon Pass* in comparison with Shelley's *Mont Blanc*. The element of Wordsworth in *Mont Blanc* (it is perceptible in these opening lines) serves only to enhance the contrast:

> The everlasting universe of things
> Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,

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[1]*Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, p. 167.
[2]See *Scrutiny* for December, 1934.

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Now dark—now glittering—now reflecting gloom—
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,—with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

The metaphorical and the actual, the real and the imagined, the inner and the outer, could hardly be more unsortably and indistinguishably confused. The setting, of course, provides special excuse for bewildered confusion ; but Shelley takes eager advantage of the excuse and the confusion is characteristic—what might be found unusual in *Mont Blanc* is a certain compelling vividness. In any case, Wordsworth himself is explicitly offering a sense of sublime bewilderment, similarly inspired:

Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face . . .

He is, of course, recollecting in tranquillity ; but the collectedness of those twenty lines (as against Shelley's one hundred and forty) does not belong merely to the record ; it was present (or at least the movement towards it was) in the experience, as those images, ' one mind,' ' the same face '—epitomizing, as they do, the contrast with Shelley's ecstatic dissipation—may fairly be taken to testify.

This comparison does not aim immediately at a judgment of relative value. *Mont Blanc* is very interesting as well as idiosyncratic, and is not obviously the product of the less rare gift. There are, nevertheless, critical judgments to be made—judgments concerning the emotional quality of Wordsworth's poetry and of Shelley's: something more than mere description of idiosyncrasy

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is in view. What should have come out in the comparison that started as a note on Wordsworth's grasp of the outer world is the unobtrusiveness with which that 'outer' turns into 'inner': the antithesis, clearly, is not altogether, for present purposes, a simple one to apply. What is characteristic of Wordsworth is to grasp surely (which, in the nature of the case, must be delicately and subtly) what he offers, whether this appears as belonging to the outer world—the world as perceived, or to inner experience. He seems always to be presenting an object (wherever this may belong) and the emotion seems to derive from what is presented. The point is very obviously and impressively exemplified in *A slumber did my spirit seal*, which shows Wordsworth at his supreme height. Here (compare it with the *Ode to the West Wind*, where we have Shelley's genius at its best; or, if something more obviously comparable is required, with Tennyson's *Break, break, break*) there is no emotional comment—nothing 'emotional' in phrasing, movement or tone; the facts seem to be presented barely, and the emotional force to be generated by them in the reader's mind when he has taken them in—generated by the two juxtaposed stanzas, in the contrast between the situations or states they represent.

Shelley, at his best and worst, offers the emotion in itself, unattached, in the void. 'In itself,' 'for itself'—it is an easy shift to the pejorative implications of 'for its own sake'; just as, for a poet with the habit of sensibility and expression described, it was an easy shift to deserving them. For Shelley is obnoxious to the pejorative implications of 'habit': being inspired was, for him, too apt to mean surrendering to a kind of hypnotic rote of favourite images, associations and words. 'Inspiration,' there not being an organization for it to engage (as in Wordsworth, whose sameness is of a different order from Shelley's, there was) had only poetical habits to fall back on. We have them in their most innocent aspect in those favourite words: *radiant, aërial, odorous, daedal, faint, sweet, bright, wingèd, -inwoven*, and the rest of the fondled vocabulary that any reader of Shelley could go on enumerating. They manifest themselves as decidedly deplorable in *The Cloud* and *To a Skylark*, which illustrate the dangers of fostering the kind of inspiration that works only when critical intelligence is switched off. These poems may be not unfairly described as

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the products of switching poetry on.[1] There has been in recent years some controversy about particular points in *To a Skylark*, and there are a score or more points inviting adverse criticism. But this need hardly be offered ; it is, or should be, so plain that the poem is a mere tumbled out spate (' spontaneous overflow ') of poeticalities, the place of each one of which Shelley could have filled with another without the least difficulty and without making any essential difference. They are held together by the pervasive ' lyrical emotion,' and that this should be capable of holding them together is comment enough on the nature of its strength.

Cheaper surrenders to inspiration may easily be found in the collected Shelley ; there are, for instance, gross indulgences in the basest Regency album taste.[2] But criticism of Shelley has something more important to deal with than mere bad poetry ; or, rather, there are badnesses inviting the criticism that involves moral judgments. It must have already appeared (it has virtually been said) that surrendering to inspiration cannot, for a poet of Shelley's emotional habits, have been very distinguishable from surrendering to temptation. The point comes out in an element of the favoured vocabulary not exemplified above: *charnel, corpse, phantom, liberticide, aghast, ghastly* and so on. The wrong approach to emotion, the approach from the wrong side or end (so to speak), is apparent here ; Shelley would clearly have done well not to have indulged these habits and these likings: the viciousness and corruption are immediately recognizable. But viciousness and corruption do not less attend upon likings for tender (' I love Love ')[3], sympathetic, exalted and ecstatic emotions, and may be especially expected to do so in a mind as little able to hold an object in front of it as Shelley's was.

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[1]Poesy's unfailing river
Which through Albion winds forever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave . . .
Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills.

[2]See, for instance, the poem beginning, ' That time is dead for ever, child.'

[3]See the last stanza of ' Rarely, rarely comest thou.'

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The transition from the lighter concerns of literary criticism to the diagnosis of radical disabilities and perversions, such as call for moral comment, may be conveniently illustrated from a favourite anthology-piece, *When the lamp is shattered*:

When the lamp is shattered
The light in the dust lies dead—
When the cloud is scattered
The rainbow's glory is shed.
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendour
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:—
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

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The first two stanzas call for no very close attention—to say so, indeed, is to make the main criticism, seeing that they offer a show of insistent argument. However, reading with an unsolicited closeness, one may stop at the second line and ask whether the effect got with ' lies dead ' is legitimate. Certainly, the emotional purpose of the poem is served, but the emotional purpose that went on being served in that way would be suspect. Leaving the question in suspense, perhaps, one passes to ' shed ' ; ' shed ' as tears, petals and coats are shed, or as light is shed? The latter would be a rather more respectable use of the word in connection with a rainbow's glory, but the context indicates the former. Only in the vaguest and slackest state of mind—of imagination and thought—could one so describe the fading of a rainbow ; but for the right reader ' shed ' sounds right, the alliteration with ' shattered ' combining with the verse-movement to produce a kind of inevitability. And, of course, suggesting tears and the last rose of summer, it suits with the general emotional effect. The nature of this is by now so unmistakable that the complete nullity of the clinching ' so,' when it arrives—of the two lines that justify the ten preparatory lines of analogy—seems hardly worth stopping to note:

> The heart's echoes render
> No song when the spirit is mute.

Nor is it surprising that there should turn out to be a song after all, and a pretty powerful one—for those who like that sort of thing ; the ' sad dirges,' the ' ruined cell,' the ' mournful surges ' and the ' dead seaman's knell ' being immediately recognizable as currency values. Those who take pleasure in recognizing and accepting them are not at the same time exacting about sense.

The critical interest up to this point has been to see Shelley, himself (when inspired) so unexacting about sense, giving himself so completely to sentimental banalities. With the next stanza it is much the same, though the emotional clichés take on a grosser unction and the required abeyance of thought (and imagination) becomes more remarkable. In what form are we to imagine Love leaving the well-built nest? For readers who get so far as asking, there can be no acceptable answer. It would be unpoetically literal to suggest that, since the weak one is singled, the truant

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must be the mate, and, besides, it would raise unnecessary difficulties. Perhaps the mate, the strong one, is what the weak one, deserted by Love, whose alliance made possession once possible, now has to endure? But the suggestion is frivolous ; the sense is plain enough—enough, that is, for those who respond to the sentiment. Sufficient recognition of the sense depends neither on thinking, nor on realization of the metaphors, but on response to the sentimental commonplaces: it is only when intelligence and imagination insist on intruding that difficulties arise. So plain is this that there would be no point in contemplating the metaphorical complexity that would develop if we could take the tropes seriously and tried to realize Love making of the weak one, whom it (if we evade the problem of sex) leaves behind in the well-built nest, a cradle, a home and a bier.

The last stanza brings a notable change ; it alone in the poem has any distinction, and its personal quality, characteristically Shelleyan, stands out against the sentimental conventionality of the rest. The result is to compel a more radical judgment on the poem than has yet been made. In ' Its passions will rock thee ' the ' passions ' must be those of Love, so that it can no longer be Love that is being apostrophized. Who, then, is ' thee '? The ' frailest '—the ' weak one '—it would appear. But any notion one may have had that the ' weak one,' as the conventional sentiments imply, is the woman must be abandoned: the ' eagle home,' to which the ' well-built nest ' so incongruously turns, is the Poet's. The familiar timbre, the desolate intensity (note particularly the use of ' bright ' in ' bright reason '), puts it beyond doubt that Shelley is, characteristically, addressing himself—the ' pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift,' the ' Love in desolation masked,' the ' Power girt round with weakness.'

Characteristically: that is, Shelley's characteristic pathos is self-regarding, directed upon an idealized self in the way suggested by the tags just quoted.[1] This is patently so in some of his best

[1] *cf.* Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold ;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill ;
Every little living nerve

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poetry ; for instance, in the *Ode to the West Wind*. Even there, perhaps, one may find something too like an element of luxury in the poignancy (at any rate, one's limiting criticism of the *Ode* would move towards such a judgment) ; and that in general there must be dangers and weakness attending upon such a habit will hardly be denied. The poem just examined shows how gross may be, in Shelley, the corruptions that are incident. He can make self-pity a luxury at such a level that the conventional pathos of album poeticizing, not excluding the banalities about (it is plainly so in the third stanza) the sad lot of woman, can come in to gratify the appetite.

The abeyance of thought exhibited by the first three stanzas now takes on a more sinister aspect. The switching-off of intelligence that is necessary if the sentiments of the third stanza are to be accepted has now to be invoked in explanation of a graver matter—Shelley's ability to accept the grosser, the truly corrupt, gratifications that have just been indicated. The antipathy of his sensibility to any play of the critical mind, the uncongeniality of intelligence to inspiration, these clearly go in Shelley, not merely with a capacity for momentary self-deceptions and insincerities, but with a radical lack of self-knowledge. He could say of Wordsworth, implying the opposite of himself, that

> he never could
> Fancy another situation
> From which to dart his contemplation
> Than that wherein he stood.

But, for all his altruistic fervours and his fancied capacity for projecting his sympathies, Shelley is habitually—it is no new observation—his own hero: Alastor, Laon, The Sensitive Plant

> (It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
> It desires what it has not, the Beautiful)

> That from bitter words did swerve
> Round the tortured lips and brow,
> Are like sapless leaflets now,
> Frozen upon December's brow.
>
> *Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills.*

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and Prometheus. It is characteristic that he should say to the West Wind,

> A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
> One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud,

and conclude:

> Be thou, Spirit fierce,
> My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

About the love of such a nature there is likely at the best to be a certain innocent selfishness. And it is with fervour that Shelley says, as he is always saying implicitly, 'I love Love.' Mr. Santayana acutely observes: 'In him, as in many people, too intense a need of loving excludes the capacity for intelligent sympathy.' Perhaps love generally has less in it of intelligent sympathy than the lover supposes, and is less determined by the object of love; but Shelley, we have seen, was, while on the one hand conscious of ardent altruism, on the other peculiarly weak in his hold on objects—peculiarly unable to realize them as existing in their own natures and their own right. His need of loving (in a sense that was not, perhaps, in the full focus of Mr. Santayana's intention) comes out in the erotic element that, as already remarked in these pages,[1] the texture of the poetry pervasively exhibits. There is hardly any need to illustrate here the tender, caressing, voluptuous effects and suggestions of the favourite vocabulary and imagery. The consequences of the need, or 'love,' of loving, combined, as it was, with a notable lack of self-knowledge and

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[1]In the 'Revaluation' of Wordsworth, December, 1934. An instance of strikingly inappropriate erotic imagery given there was the first stanza of *The Question*:

> I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
> Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
> And gentle odours led my steps astray,
> Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
> Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
> Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
> Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
> But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

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a capacity for ecstatic idealizing, are classically extant in *Epipsychidion*.

The love of loathing is, naturally, less conscious than the love of Love. It may fairly be said to involve a love of Hate, if not of hating: justification enough for putting it this way is provided by *The Cenci*, which exhibits a perverse luxury of insistence, not merely upon horror, but upon malignity. This work, of course, is commonly held to require noting as, in the general account of Shelley, a remarkable exception: his genius may be essentially lyrical, but he can, transcending limitations, write great drama. This estimate of *The Cenci* is certainly a remarkable instance of *vis inertiae*—of the power of conventional valuation to perpetuate itself, once established. For it takes no great discernment to see that *The Cenci* is very bad and that its badness is characteristic. Shelley, as usual, is the hero—here the heroine; his relation to Beatrice is of the same order as his relation to Alastor and Prometheus, and the usual vices should not be found more acceptable because of the show of drama.

Nor is this show the less significantly bad because Shelley doesn't know where it comes from—how he is contriving it. He says in his *Preface* that an idea suggested by Calderon is 'the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.' Actually, not only is the 'whole piece' Shakespearean in inspiration (how peculiarly dubious an affair inspiration was apt to be for Shelley we have seen); it is full of particular echoes of Shakespeare—echoes protracted, confused and woolly; plagiarisms, that is, of the worst kind. This Shakespeareanizing, general and particular, is—and not the less so for its unconsciousness—quite damning. It means that Shelley's drama and tragedy do not grow out of any realized theme; there is nothing grasped at the core of the piece. Instead there is Beatrice-Shelley, in whose martyrdom the Count acts Jove—with more than Jovian gusto:

> I do not feels as if I were a man,
> But like a fiend appointed to chastise
> The offences of some unremembered world.
> My blood is running up and down my veins;
> A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
> I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;

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My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

The pathos is of corresponding corruptness. The habits that enable Shelley to be unconscious about this kind of indulgence enable him at the same time to turn it into tragic drama by virtue of an unconscious effort to be Shakespeare.

There are, of course, touches of Webster: Beatrice in the trial scene is commonly recognized to have borrowed an effect or two from the White Devil. But the Shakespearean promptings are everywhere, in some places almost ludicrously assorted, obvious and thick. For instance, Act III Sc. ii starts (stage direction: 'Thunder and the sound of a storm') by being at line two obviously Lear. At line eight Othello comes in and carries on for ten lines; and he reasserts himself at line fifty. At line seventy-eight we get an effect from *Macbeth*, to be followed by many more in the next act, during which, after much borrowed suspense, the Count's murder is consummated.

The quality of the dramatic poetry and the relation between Shelley and Shakespeare must, for reasons of space, be represented —the example is a fair one—by a single brief passage (Act V Sc. iv l. 48):

O
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me go not mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!

This patently recalls Claudio's speech in *Measure for Measure* (Act III Sc. i):

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Ay, but to die, and go we know not where ;
To lie in cold obstruction and to rot ;
This sensible warm motion to become
A kneaded clod ; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice ;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world ; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling:—'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most loathed worldly life
That age, ache, penury, and imprisonment
Can lay on nature is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

The juxtaposition is enough to expose the vague, generalizing externality of Shelley's rendering. Claudio's words spring from a vividly realized particular situation ; from the imagined experience of a given mind in a given critical moment that is felt from the inside—that is lived—with sharp concrete particularity. Claudio's ' Ay, but to die . . . ' is not insistently and voluminously emotional like Beatrice's (' wildly ')

O
My God! Can it be possible . . .

but it is incomparably more intense. That ' cold obstruction ' is not abstract ; it gives rather the essence of the situation in which Claudio shrinkingly imagines himself—the sense of the warm body (given by ' cold ') struggling (' obstruction ' takes an appropriate effort to pronounce) in vain with the suffocating earth. Sentience, warmth and motion, the essentials of being alive as epitomized in the next line, recoil from death, realized brutally in the concrete (the ' clod ' is a vehement protest, as ' clay,' which ' kneaded ' nevertheless brings appropriately in, would not have been). Sentience, in the ' delighted spirit,' plunges, not into the delightful coolness suggested by ' bathe,' but into the dreadful opposite, and warmth and motion shudder away from the icy prison (' reside ' is analogous in working to ' bathe '). The shudder is there in

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'thrilling,' which also—such alliteration as that of 'thrilling region' and 'thick-ribbed' is not accidental in a Shakespearean passage of this quality—gives the sharp reverberating report of the ice as, in the intense cold, it is forced up into ridges or ribs (at which, owing to the cracks, the thickness of the ice can be seen).

But there is no need to go on. The point has been sufficiently enforced that, though this vivid concreteness of realization lodged the passage in Shelley's mind, to become at the due moment 'inspiration,' the passage inspired is nothing but wordy emotional generality. It does not grasp and present anything, but merely makes large gestures towards the kind of effect deemed appropriate. We are told emphatically what the emotion is that we are to feel; emphasis and insistence serving instead of realization and advertising its default. The intrusion of the tag from Lear brings out the vague generality of that unconscious set at being Shakespeare which Shelley took for dramatic inspiration.

Inspection of *The Cenci*, then, confirms all the worst in the account of Shelley. Further confirmation would not need much seeking; but, returning to the fact of his genius, it is pleasanter, and more profitable, to recall what may be said by way of explaining how he should have been capable of the worst. His upbringing was against him. As Mr. Santayana says: 'Shelley seems hardly to have been brought up; he grew up in the nursery among his young sisters, at school among the rude boys, without any affectionate guidance, without imbibing any religious or social tradition.' Driven in on himself, he nourished the inner life of adolescence on the trashy fantasies and cheap excitements of the Terror school. The phase of serious tradition in which, in incipient maturity, he began to practise poetry was, in a subtler way, as unfavourable: Shelley needed no encouragement to cultivate spontaneity of emotion and poetical abeyance of thought. Then the state of the world at the time must, in its effect on a spirit of Shelley's sensitive humanity and idealizing bent, be allowed to account for a great deal—as the sonnet, *England in 1819*, so curiously intimates:

> An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—
> Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
> Through public scorn,—mud from a muddy spring,—

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Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,—
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,—
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,—
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay ;
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed ;
A Senate,—Time's worst statute unrepealed,—
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

The contrast between the unusual strength (for Shelley) of the main body of the sonnet and the pathetic weakness of the final couplet is eloquent. Contemplation of the actual world being unendurable, Shelley devotes himself to the glorious Phantom that may (an oddly ironical stress results from the rime position) work a sudden miraculous change but is in any case as vague as Demogorgon and as unrelated to actuality—to which Shelley's Evil is correspondingly unrelated.

The strength of the sonnet, though unusual in kind for Shelley, is not of remarkably distinguished quality in itself ; the kindred strength of *The Mask of Anarchy* is. Of this poem Professor Elton says:[1] ' There is a likeness in it to Blake's [gift] which has often been noticed ; the same kind of anvil-stroke, and the same use of an awkward simplicity for the purposes of epigram.' The likeness to Blake is certainly there—much more of a likeness than would have seemed possible from the characteristic work. It lies, not in any assumed broadsheet naïveté or crudity such as the account cited might perhaps suggest, but in a rare emotional intensity and force, deriving from a clear, disinterested and mature vision.

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said:
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

[1] *Survey of English Literature, 1780-1830,* Vol. II, p. 202.

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'My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me—
Misery, oh, Misery!'

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting, with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

These stanzas do not represent all the virtue of the poem, but they show its unusual purity and strength. In spite of 'Murder, Fraud and Anarchy,' there is nothing of the usual Shelleyan emotionalism—no suspicion of indulgence, insistence, corrupt will or improper approach. The emotion seems to inhere in the vision communicated, the situation grasped: Shelley sees what is in front of him too clearly, and with too pure a pity and indignation, to have any regard for his emotions as such; the emotional value of what is presented asserts itself, or rather, does not need asserting. Had he used and developed his genius in the spirit of *The Mask of Anarchy* he would have been a much greater, and a much more readable, poet.

But *The Mask of Anarchy* is little more than a marginal throw-off, and gets perhaps too much stress in even so brief a distinguishing mention as this. The poetry in which Shelley's genius manifests itself characteristically, and for which he has his place in the English tradition, is much more closely related to his weaknesses. It would be perverse to end without recognizing that he achieved memorable things in modes of experience that were peculiarly congenial to the European mind in that phase of its history and are of permanent interest. The sensibility expressed in the *Ode to the West Wind* is much more disablingly limited than current valuation allows, but the consummate expression is rightly treasured. The Shelleyan confusion appears, perhaps, at its most poignant in *The Triumph of Life*, the late unfinished poem. This

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poem has been paralleled with the revised *Hyperion*, and it is certainly related by more than the *terza rima* to Dante. There is in it a profounder note of disenchantment than before, a new kind of desolation, and, in its questioning, a new and profoundly serious concern for reality:

> . . . their might
> Could not repress the mystery within,
> And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night
>
> Caught them ere evening . . .
>
> For in the battle Life and they did wage,
> She remained conqueror . . .
>
> 'Whence camest thou? and whither goest thou?
> How did thy course begin?' I said, 'and why?
>
> Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
> Of people, and my heart sick of one sad thought—
> Speak!'
>
> as one between desire and shame
> Suspended, I said—If, as it doth seem,
> Thou comest from the realm without a name
>
> Into this valley of perpetual dream,
> Show whence I came and where I am, and why—
> Pass not away upon the passing stream.

But in spite of the earnest struggle to grasp something real, the sincere revulsion from personal dreams and fantasies, the poem itself is a drifting phantasmagoria—bewildering and bewildered. Vision opens into vision, dream unfolds within dream, and the visionary perspectives, like those of the imagery in the passage of *Mont Blanc*, shift elusively and are lost ; and the failure to place the various phases or levels of visionary drift with reference to any grasped reality is the more significant because of the palpable effort. Nevertheless, the *Triumph of Life* is among the few things one can still read and go back to in Shelley when he has become, generally, 'almost unreadable.'

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Shelley's part in the later notion of 'the poetical' has been sufficiently indicated. His handling of the medium assimilates him readily, as an influence, to the Spenserian-Miltonic line running through *Hyperion* to Tennyson. Milton is patently present in *Alastor*, the earliest truly Shelleyan poem; and *Adonais*—

> Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
> Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay

—relates him as obviously to *Hyperion* as to *Lycidas*. Indeed, to compare the verse of *Hyperion*, where the Miltonic Grand Style is transmuted by the Spenserianizing Keats, with that of *Adonais* is to bring out the essential relation between the organ resonances of *Paradise Lost* and the pastoral melodizing[1] of *Lycidas*. Mellifluous mourning in *Adonais* is a more fervent luxury than in *Lycidas*, and more declamatory ('Life like a dome of many-coloured glass'—the famous imagery is happily conscious of being impressive, but the impressiveness is for the spell-bound, for those sharing the simple happiness of intoxication); and it is, in the voluptuous self-absorption with which the medium enjoys itself, rather nearer to Tennyson.

But, as was virtually said in the discussion of imagery from the *Ode to the West Wind*, the Victorian poet with whom Shelley has some peculiar affinities is Swinburne.

F. R. LEAVIS.

---

[1] O Golden tongued Romance, with serene lute!
Fair plumed Syren, Queen of far-away!
Leave melodizing on this wintry day,
Shut up thine olden pages, and be mute:

Keats. *Sonnet: on sitting down to read King Lear once again.*

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CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sirs,

Dr. F. R. Leavis's review in the June *Scrutiny* of my *English Poetry and the English Language* raises an issue of more importance than the merit or demerit of my essay. I mean the relation between literary history and literary criticism. The subtitle of my book is ' An Experiment in Literary History ' and I have devoted more than half my Introduction to defining, or attempting to define, what I conceive to be the essential differences between the two activities. Dr. Leavis, however, will have none of this. If I understand him he will not allow that there can be any such thing as literary history. A literary history, he writes, ' could be successfully attempted only by a critic and would then be essentially literary criticism.'

I think Dr. Leavis is demonstrably wrong, but as he found my exposition of the opposite point of view ' vague ' and ' not clear ' (it was entirely theoretical) I should like, with your permission, to state the case for literary history in different and more concrete terms. It will be necessary to begin with some rather elementary considerations. Dr. Leavis will, I hope, agree that the majority of propositions about literature, other than mere statements of fact, can be subsumed in a final analysis under two types. The formula for Type I, a simple example of which would be Dryden's tribute to Waller (' Unless he had written, none of us could write '), might be ' A derives from B.' And similarly Type II, which is exemplified by Arnold's dictum that ' The best of Addison's composition (the " Coverley Papers " in the *Spectator*, for example) wears better than the best of Pope's,' could be reduced to ' A is better than B,' or even just ' A is good.' Now of these two propositions the first is what I should call literary history, whereas the second only is, strictly speaking, literary criticism. But the labels are less important than a realization that the two types of proposition represent two different orders of truth. For the formula ' A derives from B ' really implies a further ' and I can prove it ' ; on the other hand the critic's formula ' A is better than B ' can only be expanded into ' I am convinced that A is better than B.' Arnold could not *prove* that Addison wears better than Pope. He was merely stating an *opinion*,

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and in order to make his opinion more plausible all that he could do, and did do, was to produce some additional *opinions* on the nature of eighteenth-century prose and verse. But the dependence of Dryden's poetry on Waller's is not an opinion but a *fact*. Its truth or falsehood can be tested by a simple examination of the relevant evidence, *e.g.* that provided by parallel passages, just as a fact is tested in a court of law.

The analysis can be taken a step further. A critical judgment, such as that cited from Arnold, is the expression of an immediate intuition. In its entirety it is necessarily inexplicable and incommunicable. Arnold, if one comes to think of it, was comparing the total impression made on him by years of familiarity with Addison's prose not only with the analogous impression he had of Pope's verse but also with his more diffused feeling of what in general constitutes good writing. And the half-conscious balancing of all these impressions against each other *resulted* in the dictum. But the process by which that result was obtained is inevitably mysterious. To compel an assent to such a judgment it would be necessary for Arnold's reader to have already read Addison and Pope in precisely the same way and against precisely the same literary background as Arnold himself possessed. And that is clearly an impossibility. An element of faith, on the reader's part, and of impressiveness or persuasiveness on the writer's, must always enter into the effective propagation of every form of literary criticism. For a literary historian, on the other hand, and for the readers of literary historians, life is much simpler. Here there are no difficulties of communication at all. A historical thesis, such as Dryden's remark already quoted, either proves or disproves itself. The historian has simply to present his reader with the evidence upon which he has himself based his conclusion, and if the evidence proves to be trustworthy and adequate his reader can have no alternative except to concur in it. All in fact that is required is some mutually acceptable rules of evidence.

In the light of these considerations I can now return to Dr. Leavis's assertion that literary history is 'essentially literary criticism.' Dr. Leavis's paradox can mean three different things. He may mean: (1) that a historical proposition ('Pope derives from Dryden') is indistinguishable from a critical proposition ('Pope is better than Dryden'); or (2) that a historical pro-

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position is just not worth making ; or (3) that historical propositions are of subsidiary importance and can be taken by the critics in their stride. But (1) is nonsense and the strict application of (2) would make any continuous survey of literature an impossibility. It is (3) therefore that Dr. Leavis probably intends, and (3) has a certain plausibility. No doubt, in a sense, critical propositions *are* more valuable than historical propositions. But, though the historian may be subordinate to the critic, Dr. Leavis is forgetting that the historian is none the less indispensable to him. Without the historians of literature where would Dr. Leavis be? Without texts, without commentaries, without biographical or technical information—in a word, without half the *data* out of which his judgments emerge. If we can read the Elizabethan dramatists to-day without undue difficulty, who have we to thank? The critics or the historians? Lamb or Dyce, Swinburne or Bullen? And let it not be imagined that any but a very exceptional critic can do the historians' work himself. The qualifications of a good critic and a good historian are, as I hope I have made clear, very different. The intuitions of the critic emerge from a temperament worlds away from the sober evidence-weighing of the historian. Taste, literary skill, a certain self-confidence, and finally an imperious urge to impose order upon the chaos of contemporary opinion—these are perhaps the *desiderata* of criticism. Literary history, on the other hand, demands the more prosaic virtues only of curiosity, learning, patience and accuracy. May I say, without offence, that I look in vain for these qualities in Dr. Leavis?

But, though I think nothing is gained by denying that literary history and literary criticism are different disciplines, employing different methods and requiring different aptitudes in their exponents, I should be the last to agree to a total divorce between the two activities. On the contrary, I believe that criticism and scholarship are both suffering to-day from their ignorance and suspicion of each other. I wrote my book very largely in the hope that, in a small way, it might help to bridge the gulf between them. I wanted to show the critics that a scholar could be aware of their problems, though my approach had necessarily to be different from theirs ; I wanted to show the scholars that their standards of exactitude and adequacy of documentation need not be sacrificed in a work of somewhat more ambitious scope than

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they usually venture on. Perhaps I was guilty of a certain presumptuousness. Dr. Leavis's review has left me in no doubt that I have failed to impress one critic whose opinions I respect. Nevertheless I am still not convinced that I was not right. Our critics *ought* to be more scholarly and our scholars more critical. But that goal cannot be reached simply by pretending that criticism and scholarship are the same thing. What I desiderate is not a deletion of the frontiers between the two professions but a more intimate co-operation between them. At present, with one or two lonely exceptions, the critics and scholars just don't know what the other is doing. How many of the subscribers to *Scrutiny* and *The Criterion* are also readers of the *Review of English Studies* and the *Modern Language Review*? *Scrutiny* is not the place for me to discuss the deficiencies of some of our leading English scholars in, but I am tempted, without prejudice to the beam in their eyes, to consider for a moment a mote in the eye of the most eminent and influential of living critics, Mr. Eliot.

The Sacred Wood is so good a book that it must seem impertinent to say that it ought to have been better. That is, however, the unpalatable truth. Mr. Eliot's ignorance of or indifference to the requirements of scholarship has given his essays a regrettable capriciousness. Some of his observations are reckless almost to the point of impudence. I must content myself with one example, selected almost at random, from 'Some Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe':

> 'The rapid long sentence, running line into line . . . marks the certain escape of blank verse from the rhymed couplet, and from the elegiac or rather pastoral note of Surrey, to which Tennyson returned. If you contrast these two soliloquies with the verse of Marlowe's greatest contemporary, Kyd—by no means a despicable versifier—you see the importance of the innovation:
>
> > The one took sanctuary, and, being sent for out,
> > Was murdered in Southwark as he passed
> > To Greenwich, where the Lord Protector lay.
> > Black Will was burned in Flushing on a stage;
> > Green was hanged at Osbridge in Kent . . .
>
> which is not really inferior to:

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So these four abode
Within one house together ; and as years
Went forward, Mary took another mate ;
But Dora lived unmarried till her death.

(Tennyson, *Dora*).'

What would a scholar's reactions be to this passage? In the first place, I suppose, he would want to know what was meant by Tennyson's ' return ' to Surrey. Tennyson's blank verse, though less varied than Marlowe's, is not end-stopped like Surrey's, and the long sentence is, as it happens, a prominent feature of it. In the second place our scholar would protest, I believe, against the unqualified attribution of *Arden of Feversham* (from which Mr. Eliot's quotation comes) to Kyd. The attribution is still entirely conjectural. It is possible too that he would hesitate to accept *tout court* the description of Kyd as ' Marlowe's greatest contemporary.' Shakespeare, after all, was born in the same year as Marlowe and they were rivals during more than half the latter's dramatic career. A more serious matter is the confusion of the deliberate naïvety of Tennyson's *Dora* with the artlessness of *Arden*. Tennyson's poem (which Mr. Eliot incidentally misquotes) is a clever, if hollow, pastiche of Wordsworth ; its fault, as Arnold pointed out, is *simplesse*, an affected simplicity. To say that it ' is not really inferior to ' the crude metrical prose of the Elizabethan dramatist is about as helpful as saying that chalk is not really inferior to cheese.

My moral is, I trust, fairly obvious. Literary history and literary criticism both have a perfectly good right to exist, and each can learn something from the other. If Dr. Leavis will try and persuade his fellow critics to adopt a somewhat less arrogant attitude towards scholarship, I will see if I can induce some of our scholars to think less harshly of him—and perhaps even to read his books.

I am, your obedient servant,

F. W. BATESON.

I did not intend to give Mr. Bateson any excuse for supposing that I despise scholarship and I am sorry if I have given him any. I intended to criticize his scholarship for being incomplete ; to insist that it was inadequate for his undertaking because (a) it relied fundamentally upon such difficult concepts as ' word ' and

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' language ' without, apparently, any realization of the difficulty or any acquaintance with the relevant analysis, and (b) it was insufficiently informed and guided by criticism. The proposition I in fact made was not of the generality that Mr. Bateson imputes: ' the kind of history that he undertakes,' I said, ' could be successfully attempted only by a critic and would then be essentially criticism ' (in another context I might have said, without inconsistency, that it could be successfully attempted only by a scholar). I have no doubt at all that there may be histories consisting, in so far as they have any use, of mere statements of fact about works of literature—works the assumed values of which the historian takes as fact too, without asking how it came to be fact or what here is the nature of fact (though even the purest ' historian ' would, if one can imagine him sufficiently aware, find himself faced with awkward questions when fixing the edge, for his purposes, of literature: we all know where Martin Tupper comes, but conventional valuation isn't universally so helpful).

The parenthesis, ' in so far as they have any use,' slipped in because actually I know of no literary history that doesn't make a show of criticism. And any history that deals in influences is committed to criticism—as Mr. Bateson, in his own way, is committed. This general proposition will surprise Mr. Bateson—or rather, he will feel, and perhaps rightly, that it justifies his ascribing to me the more general proposition. It brings me, at any rate, to my essential point against him: the radical distinction he invokes, the distinction that he reduces to the difference between fact and opinion, seems to me extraordinarily uncritical (I hope he won't think this begging the question). What is this ' fact ' of ' the dependence of Dryden's poetry on Waller's '? I should like to see by what ' sober evidence-weighing ' Mr. Bateson would set out to establish it. The only evidence he specifies is ' that provided by parallel passages '—by which, indeed, Dryden can be proved to have read Waller just as he can be proved to have read Cowley and Milton. But the most sober weighing can go no further, except in terms of critical judgments of a most complex and delicate order: ' dependence ' in any sense that can interest anyone interested in poetry—anyone who knows at first hand, and not as a fact accepted on authority, why Dryden should be worth studying—is still to be determined, estimated, defined or poohpoohed.

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Mr. Bateson can suppose his position reasonable only because he invokes an absurdly simple notion of criticism: the critic, he suggests, says, pointing to this or that work which lies there for him, the historian and all of us as a common fact, 'this is good' or 'bad.' Actually, Mr. Bateson as a literary historian can have access to the works he proposes to deal with—to his most essential facts—only if he is sufficiently a critic; only by an appropriate and discriminating response to them; a response, that is, involving the kind of activity that produces value-judgments. And these judgments are not, in so far as they are real, expressions of opinion on facts that can be possessed and handled neutrally (so to speak). The jobs, it follows, both of the scholar and the critic are (if they do them properly) more arduous than either commonly cares to recognize. I especially deplore Mr. Bateson's attitude because it encourages a lazy notion of criticism. The critic should be at least as arduously concerned for 'fact' as the scholar; not merely because he should pay due attention to the relevant facts of scholarship, but because he should be controlled by the determination to justify his treating as a fact of the public world something that cannot be tripped over, passed from hand to hand, brought into a laboratory, or, in any literal sense, pointed to (*e.g. Macbeth, Wuthering Heights, Sailing to Byzantium*). This means not self-confidence, but cultivated self-mistrust; not assertiveness, but disciplined and strenuous humility and docility—means 'curiosity,' 'patience' and 'accuracy.' So Mr. Bateson will see what a hard knock he gives me when he finds me devoid of these last three virtues ('learning' I knew I hadn't a great deal of, though I have tried hard to acquire what is relevant to my interests).

As for Dyce and Bullen, towards them I feel gratitude and respect; towards Lamb and Swinburne, when adduced as critics, very much the opposite.

As for Mr. Eliot, I have myself been in the habit of making certain critical comments on the passage that Mr. Bateson criticizes; but I suspect that Mr. Eliot might reply to Mr. Bateson's criticisms that, as they stand, they combine pedantry with inaccuracy.

And as for Mr. Bateson's book, I did not think it necessary to say in my review (what I say now) that I found it well worth disagreeing with and that I was grateful for the opportunity.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

EDITORIAL

Poison Gas (Union of Democratic Control, 34 Victoria Street, S.W.1, 6d.).

Who's Who in Arms, by W. H. Williams (Labour Research Department, 60 Doughty Street, W.C.1, 6d.).

The Peace Ballot : The Official History, by Dame Adelaide Livingstone (Gollancz, 1s.).

The Council for Civil Liberties, 99a Charing Cross Road, W.C.

THE best way, perhaps, of focusing attention upon the items juxtaposed above, is to minimize comment—indeed, the juxtaposition is, for the immediate purpose, comment enough. *Poison Gas*, we know, has escaped the attention of many who, if they knew of it, would be eager to further its circulation. We suggest that readers who find it important should send copies to suitably selected acquaintances and others. And they might underline in the pamphlet Mr. Baldwin's classical statement of the case ; a statement to which, especially since the notorious Home Office circular on Air-raid Defence, it seems impossible to give too much currency :

> ' The only defence is in offence, which means that you have to kill women and children more quickly than the enemy if you want to save yourselves . . . '

Who's Who in Arms provides an essential supplement even to those reports of evidence given before the Royal Commission which are to be found in our more august and authoritative newspapers.

Perhaps the passage to underline above all others in *The Peace Ballot* is this from Lord Cecil's ' Conclusion ' : ' The machinery created all over the country for the Ballot must not be allowed to disappear. In some form or other it should be kept in being in every constituency.'—The place on which to lay stress is not the mere size of the twelve million vote, but the organization

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(together with the habits of active co-operative interest) involved in getting it recorded.

But however boldly that machinery is used (and the most sceptical, hoping at all, must urge its being brought into action), work apart from it will be indispensable. And whoever has taken an active interest in educating and mobilizing public opinion will know the reason for including in the list above the Council for Civil Liberties.

We hope to make some reference in the next *Scrutiny* to the Conference on Academic Freedom now being held at Oxford. (For inquiries: *Hon. Secretary, Provisional Committee on Academic Freedom*: David Abercrombie, Esq., 55 Great Ormond Street, W.C.1).

POETS AND THE DRAMA

MURDER IN THE CATHEDRAL, by T. S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, 5/-).

THE DOG BENEATH THE SKIN, OR WHERE IS FRANCIS? by W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood (Faber and Faber, 7/6).

Murder in the Cathedral is a play about St. Thomas à Becket. It is in two parts, the first dealing with St. Thomas's return to Canterbury, and his danger and his temptations, and the second presenting his murder and his murderers' excuses for their deed. Between the two parts is an interlude, consisting of a sermon preached by the Saint on Christmas morning, 1170, on the text 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men,' and it is I think in this sermon that the theme of the play is given most clearly. St. Thomas, speaking of Government, defines it as 'the action of impurity on impurity. Not so in Heaven'; and he goes on to explain that 'the true martyr' is one who 'has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and lost it but found it, for he has found freedom in submission to God.' The core of the tragedy is the irreconcilability of Heaven and the World, of Good and Evil.

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The chorus represent ordinary miserable humanity:

> King rules or barons rule;
> We have suffered various oppression
> But mostly we are left to our own devices.

They feel, Cassandra-like, the coming doom,

> —an act
> Which our eyes are compelled to witness, has forced our feet
> Towards the cathedral. We are forced to bear witness.

They are reproved by one of the priests, for not rejoicing at their Bishop's safe return, but he bids let them be,

> They speak better than they know, and beyond your understanding.
> They know and do not know, that acting is suffering,
> And suffering is action. Neither does the actor suffer
> Nor the patient act. But both are fixed
> In an eternal action, an eternal patience
> To which all must consent that it may be willed
> And which all must suffer that they may will it . . .

The chorus also stand for the common man's fear of spiritual experience:

> . . . leave us and leave us be, in our humble
> and tarnished frame of existence, leave us; do not ask us
> To stand to the doom on the house, the doom on the Archbishop, the doom on the world

('for our lives are mostly a constant evasion of ourselves, and an evasion of the visible and sensible world'—*The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*). Mr. Eliot has succeeded in making his chorus an integral part of the play; they are not a merely pseudo-classical impedimenta, but represent the framework of society, the average human background against which the tragic act takes place. Particularly good is the way in which their prescience and prophecy, their unnatural tension, and unwilling participation in the martyrdom, fall from them in the end:

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Forgive us, O Lord, we acknowledge ourselves as type
of the common man,
Of the men and women who shut the door and sit by
the fire,
. . . . . .
Who fear the injustice of men less than the justice of God.

The Knights represent the governing classes, the hearty, practical ambitious political element. In contrast to the suave or noble norm of St. Thomas and the Chorus, they speak abruptly, but with vigour—

The King's justice, the King's majesty,
You insult with gross indignity ;
Insolent madman, whom nothing deters
From attainting his servants and ministers.

Their excuses are made in a sort of Shavian prose, after the murder. There is some effective irony here:

> 'Had Becket concurred with the King's wishes, we should have had an almost ideal State: a union of spiritual and temporal administration, under the central government. I knew Becket well, in various official relations ; and I may say that I have never known a man so well qualified for the highest rank of the Civil Service.'

This scene lowers the tension after the murder, affords relief, and gives new interest to the theme of the play by discussing it on a new level, and replacing the liturgical incantatory rhythms and solemnly religious feelings which are exploited practically without change up till the murder by more easy-fitting, everyday emotions. It is dramatically most effective ; and far better than anything in *The Rock*.

Murder in the Cathedral really is a dramatic poem. It carries on from *Ash Wednesday*, just as *Sweeney Agonistes* carries on from Mr. Eliot's earlier work and *The Hollow Men*. I believe *Sweeney* to be Mr. Eliot's most valuable dramatic work so far, because its rhythms are genuinely new tunes (not just up-to-date). Both in the best parts of *The Rock* and in *Murder in the Cathedral* one feels that the art is not concealed, it is often a little cold and academic.

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Messrs. Auden and Isherwood are neither cold nor academic ; on the other hand, they are, I feel, more up-to-date than genuinely new. If the Group Theatre is attended by the audiences that used to rag *Young England*, then *The Dog Beneath the Skin* should be a grand success. On the stage, parts of it might come off, but very little of the play stands up to cold solitary perusal. You can't have political satire nowadays—or at least *The Dog* is not successful on that level. Shaftsbury read *Absolom and Achitophel*, but I doubt whether Lord Londonderry or Mr. Montagu Norman will be among the audience at the Group Theatre next October.

The plot of the play is this: Sir Francis Crewe, son of the Squire of Pressan Ambo, a ' typical English village '—

> You shall locate it
> Wherever your heart directs you most lovingly to look ;
> you are loving towards it

—quarrelled with his father, and has never been seen again. Each year lots are cast to determine which of the young men ' unmarried and over twenty-five ' now living in the late squire's domain, shall go to seek him: £500 for expenses, and the hand of Francis's sister, Miss Iris Crewe of Honeypot Hall, for reward. The lot falls on Alan Norman, who, accompanied by a dog which has been straying round the village, departs on his search. Alan calls the dog Francis, and in the end of the play of course, the dog turns out to be the real Francis in disguise. Their wanderings are the excuse for a succession of scenes in buorgeois and fascist Westland and Ostnia: various aspects of the decay of capitalism are exhibited: one agrees with most of it—it's all very true, but one is bored—the authors have not succeeded in ' making familiar things new.'

Here is a sample. Two journalists who are travelling in the train with Alan recognize a financier called (astonishing subtlety) Grabstein. They egg Alan on to ask him questions:

1st J. Find out what holdings he has in Sahara Electrics.

2nd J. And how much it cost him to start the war in Spitsbergen?

1st J. And what became of the Cloaguan Prime Minister after the Platinum Scandals?

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The ingenuous Alan does so, and gets this answer:

> *Financier* (*laughs*) Young man you amuse me . . . The answer to all your three questions is, ' Yes, I did.' There! now you've got a grand story, haven't you? Go and ask your editor to print it and he'll kick you into the street. What's your paper, by the way? Ten to one I own it.

If one must read this kind of thing, Mr. Belloc has done it better.

There are scenes in Court, in brothels, a nursing-home, a Westland (Nazi) lunatic asylum, the Grand Babylon Hotel, and so on.

When Francis discovers himself, and they return to Pressan, the play's theme is made explicit. Francis is (roughly) the Son, the Redeemer ; Alan is you or me ; the stock village types—comic Vicar, comic General, etc.—are bourgeois civilization which is leading us to destruction. The wanderers arrive just as the Vicar is inaugurating his new patriotic nationalist youth movement. Francis reveals himself, much to everyone's annoyance ; and he explains his motives for remaining in disguise:

> ' I was fascinated and horrified by you all. I thought such obscene, cruel, hypocritical, mean, vulgar creatures had never existed before in the history of the planet . . . It's an awful shock to start seeing people from underneath.'

First he keeps anthropological records of his experiences ; then he gets bored with this (art is no good). He decides that his dog-skin was only an evasion, and here is his conclusion:

> ' I don't hate you any more . . . You are units of an immense army: many of you will die without ever knowing what your leaders are really fighting for, or even that you are fighting at all. Well, I am going to be a unit in the army of the other side . . . '

Alan goes with him ; the Curate, long since disgusted with his vicar, hesitates. He, one assumes, is Anglo-Catholicism in general and Mr. Eliot in particular.

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Curate Christ crucified
Be at my side
Confirm my mind
That it be kind
To those who assert and hurt.
On either side

I must go away,
I must go to pray
To one who is greater.

General Greater than who?

Curate Greater than you
[*He goes out*]

A few others join, and the chorus proclaims not ignobly the authors' faith:

Mourn not for these; these are ghosts who chose their pain
Mourn rather for yourselves: and your inability to make up your minds,
Whose hours of self-hatred and contempt were all your majesty and crisis,
Choose therefore that you may recover both your charity and your place
Determining that not this that we have lately witnessed: but another country
Where grace may grow outward and be given praise
Beauty and virtue be vivid there.
. . . . . .
To each his need, from each his power.

Some of the choruses are very good—one assumes they are Mr. Auden's contribution to the play. But they stand alone. They are not welded into the play, as they are in *Murder in the Cathedral*. One of them I think gives the reason for the play's failure:

First the suburban dormitories spreading over fields,
. . . . . .

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Section these dwellings and expose the life of a people
Living by law and the length of a reference
. . . . . .
Writer be glib, please them with scenes of theatrical bliss and horror,
Whose own slight gestures tell their doom with subtlety quite foreign to the stage.

The good parts of *The Dog Beneath the Skin* mostly exhibit this ' subtlety quite foreign to the stage ' ; the bad parts a crudity only too common to it.

T. R. BARNES.

RECENT VERSE

POEMS 1914-1934, by Herbert Read (Faber and Faber, 7/6 net.).

A TIME TO DANCE, by C. Day Lewis (The Hogarth Press, 5/- net).

POEMS, by George Barker (Faber and Faber, 6/- net).

LIFE QUEST, by Richard Aldington (Chatto and Windus, 3/6 net).

A DRAFT OF CANTOS XXXI-XLI, by Ezra Pound (Faber and Faber, 6/- net).

Of the pile of recent volumes of verse in front of me Mr. Herbert Read's seems to demand first and most sympathetic consideration. There can be no questioning the sincerity of the work represented in his volume. For that reason it is hard to have to classify it with that of the others ; that is, as a poetic failure. But—I think fairly obviously—some underlying fertility, without which poetry cannot be, is lacking. The springs, the deep sources of power, are cut off. To borrow Arnold's description of himself in his later years (it cannot be accidental that Mr. Read recalls Arnold in at least one passage, page 143) the author ' rakes among the stones.' There is, that is to say, a constant sense of strain—' effort of consciousness ' (page 146)—and meagre return for it. The verse (if it can be called such) is forced, the wrong pressure

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behind it, and the condensation, because the sustaining strength is inadequate, frequently results as here in most unlucky flops:

> They went: cruelly forced.
> That he should know
> doom of flesh, unique loss!
> Dear me!

Dear me, indeed.

Mr. Read's failure, as perhaps in the cases of all poetic failure, certainly in all the cases of failure I have to consider here, is a failure of rhythm. It may be roughly right to say that we detect the presence or absence of rhythm by 'the ear' and therefore to conclude that Mr. Read has no 'ear.' But if one looks into the matter at all it becomes plain that to feel that a poem is without rhythm is to feel that it is without poetic structure ; that is to say, that it is not a poem at all. It is not enough that as for example in Mr. Read's early pieces, in many of his later pieces too, and in very much contemporary verse a number of more or less striking images (predominantly visual images in Mr. Read's case) should be brought together. They will remain isolated from one another unless organized by some energy of the mind.

'It has been before observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and as accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion . . . ' (*Biographia Literaria*, Ch. XV). Blake's terrific—

> O Rose, thou art sick!
> The invisible worm
> That flies in the night,
> In the howling storm,
>
> Has found out thy bed
> Of crimson joy,
> And his dark secret love
> Does thy life destroy

—is coherent in this sense. Its poetic structure is complete.

Nothing of Mr. Read's will stand this test. There is a directness in one or two of the war pieces which one feels may not be

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without its value. But for the most part he merely points to this or that. In the later poems ' ideas ' tend to replace ' images ' and as a result we are certainly no nearer, if no further away from poetry. There are passages in these later poems which are indistinguishable from Mr. Read's prose:

> The structure of events alone is
> comprehensible and to single
> perceptions communic-
> ation is not essential.

—This had much better have been printed as prose.

> See where a haze
> Trembles against the hard horizon,
> Quivering in a rhythm that calls to mind
> The ultimate harmony of the world.

If the realization had been complete the rhythm he merely speaks of would have been there in the verse itself. We need not have been told it was so ; we should have been compelled to feel that it was so.

Mr. Day Lewis is just as lacking in essential rhythm as Mr. Read. I have found that many of those I have spoken with who have professed themselves exhilarated with Mr. Day Lewis's ' rhythm ' had not read Hopkins. It they had it would surely have been impossible for them not to have detected this mechanical travesty of a great poet. I again quote Coleridge, for he understood this matter of rhythm. ' Could a rule be given from without, poetry would cease to be poetry, and sink into a mechanical art.' Strip Mr. Day Lewis of external Hopkins and what we find a representative passage from *A Time to Dance* will illustrate:

> But look, balanced superbly, quick off the mark
> Swooping like centre three-quarter whose impetus storms
> a gap—
> Defenders routed, rooted their feet, and their arms are
> mown
> Aside, that high or low aim at his overthrow—
> M'Intosh touched her down.

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And they picked her up out of it somehow and put her
at the air
Sorry hack for such steeplechasing, to leap the sky
' We'll fly this bloody crate till it falls to bits at our feet,'
Said the mechanic Parer.

It is not poetry ; it is Kipling-Newbolt. The Old Boy may have gone Left, but he remains true at heart to the Old School.

Mr. George Barker is in some ways even more representative of what passes for poetry among the ' poetry-reading public,' or at all events the public the *Listener* identifies as such. For that reason it may be worth while spending a moment or two over him. It seems to have been supposed among this public that here at length we have the images ' modified by a predominant passion.' Mr. Barker, it is true, is subject to what he himself describes in one poem as ' celestial urges ' and in another, more appropriately, as ' vague urges.'

I, mute immutable, cry

he cries again.

Ironically echoing down the colonnade.

—That ' Ironically ' stuck in front of the romantic phrase ' echoing down the colonnade ' tells us more. It suggests that our poet is determined to be ' modern ' in spite, one might say, of himself. (One is reminded of Mr. Aldington). I suppose this is the significance also of Mr. Barker's word-play:

O in summer he came with roses
And with them rose
Over the rose trees . . .

and

Like lonely herons
The abandoned heroine

Mr. Barker may have been reading Mr. Empson, but whereas in the early Shakespeare the word-play is a fault of excess and in the later Shakespeare very often a triumph of compression, words within a word, in Mr. Barker it is insufferable pettiness. Hopkins, as seems to be inevitable, is again travestied:

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Wandering one, too wonderful

No wandering of one's wondering when
Watching your wandering.

In the very next poem Mr. Barker is again 'wandering' and 'through chaotic hills' 'meanders lost.' 'Lax though the longing may wear' 'knowing no distinction other than love' he 'flows alone along the future waves.'

* * * *

The time is long past when we could receive the lastest *Cantos* with excited expectation. They have disappointed us so often that it is no longer a disappointment that the very latest are even duller than their predecessors. It is not possible to find in them even the redeeming passages which one marked in the earlier ones. We do not have to go further than Mr. Pound's own finest work, the *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* sequence, to realize that by comparison the *Cantos* are a disaster. *Mauberley* is distinguished by the rare subtlety and variety of its verse, each poem a variation, complete in itself, yet part of a unified whole. The verse of the *Cantos* is monotonous, without vitality. Yet obviously they are written by the same man. What seems to have taken place is that with the loss of his power that man has become dependent on the habits he himself formed. There are lines here and there which seem to glow with a faint recurrence of the previous life of *Mauberley*, but by comparison very feebly.

'I think you must be Odysseus . . .
Feel better when you have eaten . . .
Always with your mind on the past . . .
Ad Orcum autem quisquam?
Nondum nave nigra pervenit . . .
Been to hell in a boat yet?'

I confess I have not laboured hard to 'understand' the latest *Cantos*. The rhythm, the verse mannerisms and the local *procédé* do not encourage to the effort.

JOHN SPEIRS.

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THE BOND AND THE FREE

GROWING OPINIONS. Ed. Alan Campbell Johnson (Methuen, 6/-).
I WAS A PRISONER, by William Holt (John Miles, 5/-).
MEANS TEST MAN, by W. Brierley (Methuen, 7/6).
CALIBAN SHRIEKS, by Jack Hilton (Cobden-Sanderson, 6/-).

If the business of a reviewer is to describe the contents of the books he reviews and to appraise their value, this is not going to be a review.

Growing Opinions is a collection of articles by members of the rising generation who, like the readers of this magazine, have had luck. They can and do read difficult books, they have no reason to con the road in order to avoid meeting a policeman.

If their ideas are not startling, they are cogently reasoned and well expressed. Mr. Storin and Mr. Lovelock's articles on Education and Sport respectively seem to me particularly good.

Anyone who does not know what the intelligent young man or woman with a university education is thinking about Life may learn it here. As a whole they seem well-informed and well-intentioned, sensible and serious, unrhetorical and a trifle dull. Perhaps, though here I may be doing them an injustice, they are a little self-satisfied, a little too conscious of their good sense, and their status as the Free.

The writers of the other three books, on the other hand, are all below the salt. Two of them have done time. The third is technically at liberty to walk out of his front door but as he cannot afford to go anywhere else, he may also be included among the Bond.

Those who cannot imagine for themselves what a modern prison is like, a fairly easy task, may learn to do so from Mr. Holt. Those who cannot imagine for themselves what the Means Test is like, a very difficult task, may learn to do so from Mr. Brierley. Those who for whatever reason feel a bitterness and hatred against life will find such a feeling expressed in magnificent Moby Dick rhetoric by Mr. Hilton, the finest writer of them all.

And then.

What is to be done?

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'What we need is a new faith' say the growing opinions, but wait for a leader to provide one.

'Make up your minds. Act', shouts the politician to the eight-year-old, knowing that the latter will be only too delighted to hear that he hasn't got to learn any more.

'The whole bloody chute is going to bust soon, and a damn good job too,' shrieks Caliban, but shrinks from wielding the crowbar because he doesn't like the sight of a bloody crown.

Every sensitive and intelligent person knows that the Means Test and the Prison are as these books describe them, and that a social system under which they are possible is grotesque. Then why does it endure a second longer?

It does so in the first place because of the quiet unostentatious courage, honesty, intelligence, kindliness and good-will of millions of individuals in their own small circle. Those therefore like the Communist, who see most clearly the defects of the system, are inclined to distrust and even dislike the considerate employer or the unembittered wage-earner. If things have got to grow worse before they can improve, then the bigger the bully chosen as Means Test inspector, the greater martinet the Prison governor, the better.

And in the second place, to those who feel that perhaps the Communist does not hold all the cards, the most disquieting fact is that the armament firms, the yellow and gutter press, the advertising agencies are staffed, not by monsters, but by extremely intelligent young men of liberal opinions.

Is the economic argument then unanswerable, or have we got to be even more pessimistic about the future of the human race?

For there are two things that every educated middle-class man (or woman) really knows to be true:

(1) That violence is always and unequivocally bad. No personal experience, no scientific knowledge, gives any other verdict than that what you can self-forgetfully love, you can cure.

> As I fall sometime in the dark,
> Do not shout as dogs do bark.
> Give me sympathy and example
> So that in your steps I will surely trample.

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Spare the rod and save the child,
Imprisonment is bleak and punishment wild.

We know this perfectly well, but we are only prepared to act on it as long as it's no trouble and there's no difficult problem. When there is we send for the hangman and the bombing plane and shut our eyes and ears.

Bernard Shaw remarks somewhere that in a really civilized community flogging would be impossible because no man could be persuaded to flog another. But as it is, any decent warder will do it for half-a-crown, not probably because he likes it or even thinks it desirable on penal grounds, but because it is expected of him. ' There! you see,' says the economist, ' the economic reason again.'

(2) That he is spending more on himself than he need, and is doing less for others than he could. But he doesn't want to seem a prig. We ought to move in such and such a direction, towards, say, a moral life or universal disarmament but let's move all together.

In other words, ' I don't want the responsibility, let a revolution do it for me.'

The difficulty is that we all know, the Communist himself is a splendid example, that if we choose, we can reject self-interest, and that only when we do so, do we achieve anything worth while.

' But I can't do that, without a faith.' But in these words we reject one. And hope that an easier one will be forced on us.

Bernard Shaw's speech in *Too True to be Good*, quoted in *Growing Opinions*, is a warning:

> ' I must have affirmations to preach ' [We have but we don't]. ' Without them the young will not listen to me ; for even the young grow tired of denials. The negative-monger falls before the soldiers, the men of action, the fighters, strong in the old uncompromising affirmations which give them status, duties, certainty of consequences ; so that the pugnacious spirit of man in them can reach out and strike deathblows with steadfastly closed minds. Their way is straight and sure but it is the way of death.'

W. H. AUDEN.

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'THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL BACKGROUND'

LITERATURE AND A CHANGING CIVILISATION, by Philip Henderson (John Lane, the Bodley Head, XXth Century Library, 3/6).

For a sixth-former, bored with the 'Great thoughts, grave thoughts, thoughts lasting to the end' kind of thing that he finds in most 'histories of literature,' this book might, perhaps, be salutary. That is about as much as one can say for it. Its subject, the relationship between 'the economic and social background of life' and contemporary writing in each period, is important; but that demands a keener integrity than is exhibited here.

Of course Mr. Henderson had an impossible task—to cover the whole of English literature (Greece, Rome and Soviet Russia thrown in) in 170 pages—and there wasn't much help to be had; but small levers, as Edwin Muir said in a review of *The Sacred Wood*, can move great weights; Mr. Henderson hasn't a fulcrum. Without some central organization the book becomes a superficial catalogue—'Bad language leads one to James Joyce.'

I suppose the first thing to notice is the heavy sprinkling of purely conventional literary judgments: 'De Quincey's cloudy splendour and Lamb's whimsical charm,' 'the jewel-like brilliance' that combines with Wilde's 'morbid sentimentality' ('In his comedies he was successful indeed'), 'the lyrical impulse, without which there can be no poetry.' The only fault found with *St. Joan* (in which Shaw 'proved himself a great dramatist') is that it 'savours rather too unpleasantly of fascist demagogy'; and the travesty of Mr. Eliot's 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (pp. 111-112) is worth looking up. Failure here is fundamental. Literary analysis is the keenest instrument we have for the understanding of human values. In Mr. Henderson's smudgy terms (He swallows, we notice, the verbalism of the æsthetic discussions in *Portrait of the Artist*) the living values of the past evaporate, and one gets the impression that Man will Live for the first time in history 'after the Revolution.' Not that Mr. Henderson is naïvely romantic—not a bit; he is sophisticated, and with a tip or two to help him he does the easier forms of debunking (*e.g.* Arnold Bennett and Scott's historical novels) easily enough.

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When we discuss the relations between productive methods and cultural 'superstructure' (Mr. Henderson avoids the Marxian terminology) what, exactly, are we talking about? It is only a literary sense, strenuously trained, that can keep us from meaningless generalities. The nearest that Mr. Henderson gets to illuminating his main theme is in sentences like these: 'A tasteless welter of conflicting styles was in the very nature of industrialism. Keats begins his career by rewriting the myth of *Endymion* after a prolonged study of Spenser, and ends it by writing *Hyperion* after a prolonged study of Milton.' 'Throughout the work of Robert Browning . . . can be clearly seen the effect of industrial complexity . . .' Perhaps it is a genuine obtuseness that makes him find *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture* a 'high-class' defence, instead of an exposure, of the present plight. 'The devotees (*sic*) of "minority culture"' are concerned merely 'to refine upon their already over-refined æsthetic sensibilities,'—living presumably on their fat unearned incomes. Merely wilful misunderstanding couldn't manage this. Or could it?

'Settling the bread-and-butter problem involves nothing short of revolution.' We agree; just as we agree that 'the conception of literature as an elegant accomplishment of the leisured class and art as "fine art"' is pernicious. But a bread-and-butter revolution is not helped by putting up the shutters on intelligence. And if we propose something more inclusive, the liberation (Lawrence's phrase) of effective human souls, we need to collect all our powers in an effort of understanding that includes the past as well as the present.

It is because Mr. Henderson fails to show us the relationship that he purports to show that his book is not even revolutionary. It exhibits, of course, the fashionable ardours. 'Once more,' in Russia, 'man is able to feel the sheer exhilaration of living, of being man, because the old class and family barriers and the petrifying money power have been smashed for ever.' One would like to believe it. But even the Communist cause is not helped by exaltations of this kind.

The problems that Mr. Henderson ought to have raised, and didn't, will, I hope, be considered at more length in the next number of *Scrutiny*.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

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COLERIDGE AS A DUAL PERSONALITY

COLERIDGE AND S.T.C., by Stephen Potter (Cape, 8/6).

It seems to be generally agreed that we have only recently begun to appreciate Coleridge's genius at its true value, and that in spite of the opium his positive achievement extends further than most people realize. There is unfortunately much less agreement as to where exactly the emphasis should fall, and no one has yet given an adequate account of the work in which his genius found its most fruitful field—his literary criticism. Mr. Potter has not attempted to supply this deficiency: his interests are biographical, psychological and philosophical, but only incidentally literary. *Coleridge and S.T.C.* is an account in Jekyll and Hyde terms: 'S.T.C.' stands for the fixed character with its failings and conventionalities, 'Coleridge' for the ever-developing personality whose real depths were often obscured by the petty faults of 'S.T.C.' This division is ascribed to some failure on Coleridge's part to accept life after his unhappy marriage, and the rest of his life is seen not as decay, but rather as a continual extension of self-awareness in an effort—partially successful—to heal the breach. I am not sure how far this conception is valid, considered as more than a biographical convenience: it certainly involves a great deal of discussion of the less important aspects of Coleridge. Mr. Potter uses it as a kind of scale to evaluate Coleridge's various activities; thus he finds 'esteceanism' in his personal relations, his poetry and criticism, his religion and philosophy, alongside of the genuine 'Coleridge' elements.

It is to his estimate of these more important aspects that we naturally look for Mr. Potter's chief contribution to the subject, and it turns out to be woefully inadequate. He is aware of the subtlety and profundity of Coleridge's thought in general, but he shows no appreciation whatever of the fineness of his intelligence when it was directed upon poetry. Indeed, the chapter 'Joint Authorship,' dealing with the poetry and criticism, is probably the worst in the book. In his eagerness to trace 'esteceanism' in the *Biographia* Mr. Potter finds personal animosity in the unfavourable criticisms of Wordsworth (especially, of course, in the

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condemnation of the ' Mighty Prophet, Seer blest ' passage), and describes the prevailing tone of the praise of Wordsworth as ' mental bombast.' After which it is not altogether surprising to find that ' Coleridge's Hamlet epitomizes the value of Coleridge as a critic,' and that the Shakespeare criticism in general is the most important. The context leaves no doubt that this means chiefly the character-analysis, in which Coleridge's psychological bent hindered his response to the poetry actually before him. ' The Shakespeare of our generation,' says Mr. Potter, ' is, to a measurable extent, Shakespeare plus Coleridge,' and he is apparently quite willing that it should be so. And what are we to make of this, on the poetry?—' Coleridge knew persons, and could honour persons, a rarer and better gift even than the power of fascinating the world with word-music.'

Though the chapter on philosophy includes much abstract discussion of the difference between Reason and Understanding, there is very little mention of the Imagination-Fancy distinction. The concluding chapter on ' Anticipation and Prophecy ' is an attempt to discover Coleridge's ' message ' for the present day ; and it enables the reader to identify a certain flavour that has been evident throughout the book : the comparison with Goethe reminds us unmistakably of Mr. Middleton Murry and his prophet-heroes.

Mr. Potter has added an appendix on Dr. Richards' *Coleridge on the Imagination*, which he considers ' perhaps the best book on Coleridge which has yet appeared,' though he objects to the author's general materialist standpoint. One would hardly expect any radical criticism, for *Coleridge and S.T.C.* is after all even less concerned with literature than *Coleridge on the Imagination*. Mr. Potter gives no evidence that he appreciates the importance of, say, the later chapters of the *Biographia* or the essays on *Shakespeare as a Poet Generally*, and *Shakespeare's Judgment equal to his Genius*. Here Coleridge's psychological profundity and his concern for essential principles are seen to be inseparable from his immediate particular perceptions. A full consideration of the chapter ' On the specific symptoms of poetic power elucidated in a critical analysis of Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* and *Rape of Lucrece*,' besides demonstrating this point in itself, would show how Coleridge anticipated many of the most important doctrines of modern critics, including the impersonality preached

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by Flaubert and Henry James, Dr. Richards' theory of rhythm, and Mr. Eliot's description of the Metaphysical sensibility. And no book written on Coleridge has given a really adequate account of his profound understanding of the organic nature of poetry. This, ultimately, is the importance of the definition of Imagination ('The poet . . . brings the whole soul of man into activity'): it also enabled him to settle once and for all the question of Form and Content ('No work of true genius dares want its appropriate form, neither indeed is there any danger of this.'). That this and similar questions should still be such a fruitful source of critical fallacies only shows that the vague respect accorded to the greatest English critic seldom involves any real appreciation of his achievement. We still need a book that will treat Coleridge neither as semasiologist nor as an explorer of the self, but primarily as a literary critic.

R. G. Cox.

THE DESTRUCTIVE ELEMENT, by Stephen Spender (Cape, 8/6).

This collection of short studies of some important modern writers shows the author in a sympathetic light. Not that it contains anything surprisingly original or profound but because the author has taken pains to make his own all the best work that has already been done on these writers. Every page is stamped with a pleasing sincerity and strength of purpose. He is not directly concerned with criticizing his authors so much as to discover what they are writing about. This he finds to be the moral and political life of the times. All his authors are aware of the chaos which has come upon both these subjects and adopt various expedients in front of this chaos. This conclusion is not unfamiliar to readers of this review and no harm is done by repetition. But despite the author's intention to avoid criticism the book contains a great number of irrelevant critical remarks. The value of these, and indeed of the whole book, lies in their relation to Mr. Spender's verse. One could confirm one's judgment of the *Poems* by reference to his opinions of, say, Eliot and Lawrence.

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Perhaps the most interesting section of the book is that which deals with those contemporary writers whose subject is the Class War. In ' tone ' and strength of judgment Mr. Spender far surpasses Mr. Day Lewis whose *A Hope for Poetry* was reviewed in an earlier issue. Mr. Spender claims that the moral life of the individual is robbed of significance by the more pressing claims of a political morality:

> ' In revolutionary times it is questions of social justice, of liberty, of war, of peace, of election, that become really important. Questions of private morality, of theft, of adultery, become almost insignificant ; in private life there remain few great saints, and absolutely no great sinners. The old question of free will, of whether the individual is free to choose between two forces of action becomes superseded by another question: Is a society able to determine the course of its history?' (p. 18).

He claims that this represents a ' profound alteration ' in the situation ; and that writers are in a different position from that of T. S. Eliot. But I am not quite sure that a case has been made out for this alteration ; especially as Mr. Spender insists in some very fine passages on the right of the poet of revolutionary sympathies to remain a critic in the name of civilization before any political creed.

> ' The business of artists is to insist on human values. If there is need for a revolution, it is these human values that will make the revolution.'

This is well said ; but does it not suggest that underlying the concern for social justice there remain in the same form the concerns to be found in *The Waste Land*?

H. A. MASON.

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MR. MAUGHAM & SPANISH LITERATURE

DON FERNANDO, by W. Somerset Maugham (Heinemann, 8/6).

Spain has been unfortunate in her European interpreters. The old black legend of Motley and Prescott has died hard, and now the author of *Cakes and Ale* gives us a new one. Spain never produced anything worth talking about in art or literature, but it produced great men instead. Its literature is interesting in so far as it reveals character, but that is all—except for Cervantes and St. John of the Cross (who is almost as good as Vaughan!). Spanish literature has been generally neglected in England and Mr. Maugham is encouraging this neglect ; *Don Fernando* will probably be widely read by headmasters.

Briefly speaking, Mr. Maugham has no qualifications as a literary critic except honesty and a flair for the striking in narrative. Some of his quotations are extremely interesting, but there is a blindness to artistic excellence which invalidates almost all his judgments. I think that he misrepresents most of the authors that he quotes, and he quotes widely. His facts are not always reliable and his authorities are a heterogeneous bunch. But it is impossible to take Mr. Maugham point by point ; instead I shall try to present a case for the study of Spanish literature of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries.

Spanish literature of the Golden Age is a remarkable expression of a homogeneous culture. Very few times in the history of the world can a single nation have been so knit together intellectually and emotionally. Riches and poverty existed side by side, but rich and poor were united in aims and ideals ; Quixote and Sancho understood one another. The common interests, the organic life of the community meant that the literature of the court and church, and that of the peasant and worker, were accessible to one another. The enlightened classes quoted the ballads ; Calderon reckoned the ' ingeniosa plebe ' as a part of the audience for the most abstract type of play that has existed in Europe. The ballads sprang originally from the aristocratic *chansons de geste*, to become part of the popular life of the country: after they were imitated, adapted and glossed by the poets of the Golden Age.

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In the same way many of the short *coplas*, so frequent still in Spain to-day, had their origin in the sophisticated literature of the past. In a recent collection I came across the verse:

Cuando pitos, flautas:
cuando flautas, pitos;
la cabra más coja
parió dos cabritos.[1]

These lines came from a poem of Gongora's, itself founded on a popular proverb. The sophisticated and the folk blended together, reinforced one another to a greater extent than elsewhere in Europe, and to the common advantage of both. In the fifteenth century the Marquess of Santillana could introduce into one of his lyrics:

La niña que amores ha,
¿sola cómo dormirá?[2]

and Lope de Vega in the seventeenth:

Molinero, ¿porqué no mueles?
Porque me beben el agua los bueyes.[3]

Instances such as these could be multiplied indefinitely.

It is very difficult to compare the literature of one country with that of another. Generally such an attempt degenerates into saying that there has only been one Shakespeare, or that Racine wrote in French. Yet I am going to be rash enough to try to indicate how the Spanish Golden Age differs from sixteenth and seventeenth century England. In England (in spite of the Elizabethan dramatists, prose-writers and other figures such as Bunyan) the popular and the sophisticated currents were kept farther apart. The influence of poular speech and peasant idiom was great, but not so great as in Spain; it is possible to read many English seventeenth-century authors without even suspecting the existence of the ballads—and that would not be possible with the

[1] 'All is topsy-turvy; the most lame of the she-goats bore two kids.'
[2] 'The girl who is in love, how can she sleep alone?'
[3] 'Miller why do you not grind? Because the oxen are drinking the water.'

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Spanish. The English ballads, fine as many of them are, seem more diffuse, less intense, less subtle after reading the Spanish ballads. Our minor folk poetry had a tendency to degenerate into nonsense, due perhaps to the lack of a current from above that could filter down and strengthen it ; I do not find this tendency nearly so marked in Spain. Here is a folk-riddle, collected last century :

Guardada en estrecha cárcel
por soldados de marfil,
está una roja culebra
que es la madre del mentir. (la lengua).[1]

Behind this lies the imagery of the Golden Age and a Catholic view of life.

Again there is a contrast to our sophisticated literature. When I read the Elizabethan dramatists and the metaphysical poets my admiration is mainly stimulated by the richness of their texture, by the sudden twists and turns of feeling that they display. In the contemporary Spanish literature there is often the same richness, but the twists and turns are more subordinate to the whole. Gongora and Donne are both surprising poets ; but Gongora's surprises never seem to contradict the mood that is to be established in the poem, while Donne's sometimes seem to do so.[2] Our seventeenth-century was a time of civil war and controversy, rich though it was in intellectual and spiritual life ; in Spain there was not the same waste of energy.

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[1] ' A red snake, who is the mother of lying, is guarded in a narrow prison by ivory soldiers—the tongue.' Contrast the English riddle :

Thirty white horses upon a red hill,
Now they tramp, now they champ, now they stand still.

[2] I am thinking of such lines as :

When my grave is broke up againe
Some second ghest to entertaine
(For graves have learn'd that woman-head
To be to more than one a Bed) . . .

Or the opening lines of *The Ecstasie*.

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This harmony that I find in Spanish literature was largely due to catholicism. With the exception of Cervantes (in whose works are to be found traces of Erasmism), the great figures of the Golden Age are catholic in outlook. There is no need to dwell on the mystic writers, for what I mean applies to more than a small group of people. In Gongora, for instance, there is an exquisite appreciation of the life of the senses, combined with the feeling that it is all transient—El cielo os guarde, si puede, de las locuras del conde.

The later picaresque novels (which Mr. Maugham has completely misunderstood) are dominated by disillusion with the possibility of leading a good life that is not directed to the life beyond the grave. The rogue knows that he is a sinner ; the judge banishes thieves in order that he himself may have a better opportunity for robbery. It was Quevedo the moralist who wrote the life of *Paul the Sharper of Segovia.*

The extraordinary richness of the Spanish theatre makes it difficult to write about. Lope de Vega has had his due of praise in this year of the tercentenary of his death ; so I shall say a few words about Calderon. Had he obeyed the unities he might well have been considered the most neoclassical of dramatists, such is the compactness of his construction. His language is often exaggerated, but it is always stylized ; he is neoclassical in a baroque convention. Because of this he is often in danger of mere formalism, a danger that he does not always escape ; but in his best work he produced something unique in European literature.

His plays of honour have been given too much prominence by previous critics. Much more important are his religious and (so-called) philosophical plays ; *Life is a Dream* is perhaps the finest of them. The action is complicated, but entirely directed to show that all the glories of the world are unreal unless they are based on the life of the spirit. At one point the hero, Segismundo, exclaims:

> ¿Qué pasado bien no es sueño?
> ¿Quién tuvo dichas heroicas,
> que entre sí no diga, cuando
> las revuelve en su memoria,

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sin duda que fue soñado
cuanto vi?[1]

The expression is as bare as it could well be, but it is backed up, reinforced by the whole of the play. The characters are unimportant in themselves, but as they fit into the play, they become of supreme importance. Mr. Maugham considers that Calderon's characters have no life ; he does not appear to have noticed that they form part of a design. Segismundo is not important because of his individuality, but because he is the image of every man who puts too great a trust in the life of the senses. We may distrust the catholic solution, but we cannot afford to neglect the catholic analysis of the human situation. Allowing for differences in age and country, Calderon seems to me to have the same importance for counter-reformation catholicism that Dante has for mediæval.

There is no getting away from the fact that most people are taught Spanish for commercial reasons. In these pages I have tried to indicate why it seems to me a subject that is worth taking seriously. In doing so I have had to miss out the consideration of much that is important, and to generalize more than is wise. But I hope at least to have shown that Spain made a very considerable contribution to European sensibility. Spanish is worth study. No less than other literatures Spanish can be used as a means for training intelligence and sensibility ; let us hope that this may come to be generally considered a reason for the study of modern languages.

E. M. WILSON.

[1] 'What good that has passed is not a dream? Who is there who has enjoyed heroic fortunes who does not say to himself (when he turns them over in his mind): "Without doubt all that I saw was dreamed."?'

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ETHICAL TASTE

PATTERNS OF CULTURE, by Ruth Benedict (Routledge, 1935. 10/6 net.).

This must be considered a lucky book ; appearing now, it is certain to win more respect than in a few years' time it will seem to have merited. It is not original in material or outlook, and it fails to develop at all fully its fundamental ethical implications. But it does formulate clearly and illustrate readably a point of view in social psychology or cultural anthropology which public opinion is coming to regard as more and more important. It is in short quite good and very opportune.

Its theme is the wide range of difference in the human behaviour that may be institutionalized by cultures and in its own setting be considered ' normal ' :

> ' The cultural pattern of any civilization makes use of a certain segment of the great arc of potential human purposes and motivations . . . The great arc along which all the possible human behaviours are distributed is far too immense and too full of contradictions for any one culture to utilize even any considerable portion of it . . . Our only scientific course is to consider our own culture, so far as we are able, as one example among innumerable others of the variant configurations of human culture.'

Biological interpretations of customary sentiments are of small reliability, similar biological situations producing quite diverse feelings and attitudes in different cultures. The death of a relative is treated in three different ways (of which none is quite like ours) by the three cultures with which Dr. Benedict has demonstrated her theme:

> ' The Pueblos . . . treat the death of a relative as one of the important emergencies when society marshals its forces to put discomfort out of the way. Though grief is hardly institutionalized in their procedures, they recognize the loss situation as an emergency which it is necessary to minimize. Among the Kwakiutl, regardless of whether or not there may also be

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genuine sorrow, mourning institutions are special instances of a cultural paranoia according to which they regard themselves as shamed by the death of their relatives and rouse themselves to get even. In Dobu the mourning institutions have much in common, but primarily they are punishments inflicted by the blood kin upon the spouse for having caused the death of one of their number. That is, the mourning institutions are again one of numberless occasions which Dobu interprets as treachery, and handles by selecting a victim whom it may punish.'

The greater part of the book is made up of rather detailed descriptions of the three cultures mentioned here—descriptions which condense the longer accounts of field anthropologists (including Dr. Benedict herself) and organize them in a way that illustrates those features of temperament and sentiment which Dr. Benedict regards as fundamental to the culture.

In her comments on western culture she is at her best in pointing out how relative our standards of abnormality are ; how one age may give the highest respect to developments of personality that will later be regarded as seriously morbid. Of our contemporary culture she takes individual competitiveness to be the dominant trait and deplores its dominance. She attempts no justification of her ethical taste here or elsewhere, and in fact she leaves it uncertain whether she believes at all in standards having more than local validity, standards for choosing among cultures. Certainly she refers to none ; and yet she says that ' we may train ourselves to pass judgment upon the dominant traits of our own civilization.' It looks as if the time is ripening for a boom in ethics.

D. W. HARDING.

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THE LETTERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

THE LETTERS OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS TO ROBERT BRIDGES. THE CORRESPONDENCE OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS AND RICHARD WATSON DIXON. Edited by Claude Colleer Abbott (Oxford University Press, 30/-).

The irony of the process by which an original genius becomes a classic has been exemplified with peculiar force in the recent history of Gerard Manley Hopkins (the history that did not start till thirty years after his death). For one thing, developments in the last few years have been so rapid. Half a decade ago, though his name was pretty generally known, to judge him the greatest poet of the Victorian age was a perverse and laughable eccentricity. It is not, perhaps, orthodoxy to-day, but even in the academic world it is a debatable proposition ; and an undergraduate, on the most solemn and critical occasion, might risk it without being defiantly foolhardy. At any rate, here are Hopkins's letters edited by a Professor of English Language and Literature and placed implicitly alongside those of Keats.

And once again, yet once again—this it is that so especially enforces the irony—Hopkins has an editor who betrays radical hostility to what Hopkins stood and stands for. To have said this without notable provocation would have been ungracious ; one is grateful for the services that scholarship can perform. But Professor Abbott goes out of his way to challenge plain speaking. Hopkins, he says (both the air and the graces are characteristic) ' is accepted by the young as one of their contemporaries, and—a more doubtful privilege—he has even been affiliated to the Martin Tuppers of our day whose scrannel pipes have infected the field of poetry with mildew and blight.' Professor Abbott nowhere risks anything more specific than this, but the content and tone of the whole Introduction[1] make it quite impossible to hope that,

[1]See for instance the ' petty and superfluous,' the completely gratuitous, footnote on p. xxxviii : ' Petty and superfluous beside

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in spite of the tropes in this unfortunate passage, he intends a critical discrimination—a discrimination against the derivative and insignificant. He leaves us no room for doubting that what he intends to discredit is the influence (the source of infection) ; that what he dislikes is the living force. It would be foolish to make a fuss whenever the academic mind behaves characteristically, but there is a classical quality about this instance—about Professor Abbott's use of Hopkins (whom as a contemporary he would so clearly have scorned) to bolster a self-importance that feels itself threatened by all that Hopkins represents: the disturbing new life, the stir of spirit that manifests itself in unfamiliar forms and does not permit, yet, the easy recognition—the flattering sense—of the placed and known.

The volume of letters to Bridges itself, apart from the Introduction, presents what should be a classical instance, and even without the editor's insisting as he does there would have been no way of avoiding the unhappy theme. It is central to a consideration of the letters, and to deal with it honestly is a critical duty: history, 'teaching by examples,' will go on teaching and repeating itself, but it is certainly the business of criticism to get what general recognition it can for an example so obvious and impressive. And then there is justice to be done to the heroic quality of Hopkins's genius.

Hopkins had, we are told, to be kept waiting for publication till so long after his death because the time was not yet ripe. But in due course it ripened: 'In 1915, in his *Spirit of Man*, Bridges printed seven of his friend's pieces,[1] and it was the wide success and sale of this anthology both in England and America, and

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it is that clever and rootless verse of our own day which apes the discovery of kindred desolation.'

Another footnote (p. xxvii), it may perhaps be in place to record here, runs (*The Wreck of the Deutschland* being in question): 'Is it fanciful to hear behind his rhythm something of Campbell's *Battle of the Baltic* and Cowper's *Loss of the Royal George*?'—And indeed we know for a fact that he had read Campbell's poem, and cannot doubt that he knew Cowper's.

[1]Those who check footnote 5 on p. xix will establish that four of these were pieces of pieces.

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the knowledge that the time was now ripe, that led him to agree to Mr. Humphrey Milford's wish for an edition of Hopkins's poems.' The world would appear to owe a very considerable debt to Mr. Milford. But that is not Professor Abbott's point. After telling us that the poems in the edition of 1918 were 'read with eagerness by the "little clan" that knows "great verse,"' he goes on: 'How small this clan was can be seen from the publisher's figures for the edition, which was not exhausted for ten years.[1] They are figures that effectively kill the legend, invented in our own day, of a public panting to read poetry arbitrarily withheld. The taste of the "public" in such matters is always negligible.'

The legend, if it existed, was negligible too. What may be smothered, but cannot be killed, is the fact that the little clan was, until 1918 (Hopkins having died in 1889), given no chance to show its eagerness; if time, during those thirty years, ripened, it did so without the help of the obvious procedure.

> 'What are works of art for? to educate, to be standards. Education is meant for the many, standards are for public use. To produce is of little use unless what we produce is known, if known widely known, the wider known the better, for it is by being known it works, it does its duty, it does good. We must then try to be known, aim at it, take means to it.'

Hopkins wrote this to Bridges in 1886 (Letter CXXXVI), exhorting 'you and Canon Dixon and all true poets.' In the spirit of this, where Hopkins's own work was concerned, Canon Dixon had, on his first introduction to specimens, acted with generous and embarrassing impetuosity (see VIA, VIB, VIIB, VIII, IX and X in the *Correspondence*), convinced that publication, even in the unlikely places open to him, would affect others as he had been himself affected, and begin the process of getting Hopkins known. If Bridges had believed in Hopkins, had seen what the poetry was, he would somehow have contrived to get it published, even if—or,

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[1] '750 copies were printed; 50 were given away; 180 sold in the first year; 240 in the second year; then an average of 30 a year for six years, rising to 90 in 1927. The last four copies were sold in 1928. The price was twelve shillings and sixpence.'

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rather, because—' In tone and spirit this work was at a last remove from the characteristic verse and and prose of the period.' But —' Bridges did not wish the book to drop unheeded, nor did he want his friend's name to be environed by the barbarous noise

Of owls and cuckoos, asses, apes and dogs '

(a thoughtlessly unkind way of referring to one's kind—to one's predecessors in the cult of ' a continuous literary decorum ').[1] ' Rightly he walked warily. In 1893 he persuaded A. H. Miles to give Hopkins a place in the well-known anthology, *Poets of the XIXth Century* ; he himself wrote the introductory memoir to the eleven poems printed, a selection that gives a fair idea of the poet's range and worth.' The ' eleven poems ' were, a footnote tells us: ' part of 50, part of 73, part of 44, selected lines from 77, 3, 8, 9, 26, 31, 33, 51.' The reader who looks up these references in the *Poems* will find that 50 and 44, of which ' parts ' were printed, and 77, 8, 9, 26 and 51, from which ' selected lines ' were printed, are sonnets. This, then, was wary walking ; there could be no more final exposure.

Bridges' attitude to Hopkins's poetry is, of course, made plain enough in the ' Preface to Notes ' in the *Poems*. And Bridges' case no one could diagnose as one of uneasy self-importance. What he exhibits is a complete security ; a complete incapacity to doubt his competence or to suspect that the criteria by which he condemns, condones, corrects and improves may not be appropriate. Thus he can, sincerely intent upon doing his best for his friend and for English poetry, pick out from Hopkins's sonnets the best parts and lines for publication ; leave out, when printing *Margaret* in *The Spirit of Man*, the second couplet ; and even in the *Poems* print a completely unauthorized improvement of his own, having (see the note to 51—the improved version of which sonnet has been perpetuated) ' no doubt that G.M.H. would have made some such alteration.' He was, although he had behind him a history

[1] ' For these blemishes in the poet's style are of such quality and magnitude as to deny him even a hearing from those who love a continuous literary decorum, and are grown to be intolerant of its absence.' Robert Bridges ; *Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, p. 96 (2nd Ed.).

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of sustained relevant controversy with Hopkins, truly incapable of the doubt. As Hopkins wrote to Canon Dixon (*Correspondence*, IX): ' people cannot, or they will not, take in anything however plain that departs from what they have been taught and brought up to expect: I know it from experience.' And Bridges is a superb example of what education will do for one ; his expectations —his taste, his sense of Form and his love of a ' continuous literary decorum '—were uncompromising, incorruptible and completely self-confident. His incapacity was of the same kind as that exhibited by Johnson with respect to *Lycidas* (or *Macbeth*) ; though the positives behind the taste in which Johnson was trained had so much more body and vitality, and a classical education in his time was so much more solidly and intimately related to English tradition and contemporary life than in Bridges'. Decorum for Bridges had nothing like the Augustan correlations ; it was a prim donnish conventionality. What, in fact, Bridges represents is essentially the academic mind, though with such confidence, completeness and conviction of authority as to constitute a truly memorable distinction.

All this is not said wantonly. To put it at the most obvious, we have, in following the letters, to divine what kind of thing Hopkins is answering and what kind of correspondent he is addressing (Bridges' letters are not given us ; he is presumed to have destroyed them). There is plenty of evidence to put certain important matters beyond question. That the friend to whom Hopkins cherished a life-long attachment had admirable qualities we cannot doubt ; but we have at the same time to note, in appreciating its strength, that the attachment persisted in spite of a constant incomprehension and discouragement, on the friend's part, of Hopkins's genius. This is not guesswork ; the evidence is pervasive and conclusive—much more abundant than would suffice for certitude. Bridges' critical attitude, it is plain, remained all the way through essentially that which, at the outset in 1877, drew from Hopkins this (XXXVII):

> ' You say you would not for any money read my poem again. Nevertheless I beg you will. Besides money, you know, there is love. If it is obscure do not bother yourself with the meaning but pay attention to the best and most intelligible

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stanzas, as the two last of each part and the narrative of the wreck. If you had done this you wd. have liked it better and sent me some serviceable criticisms, but now your criticism is of no use, being only a protest memorialising me against my whole policy and proceedings.'

Hopkins was over-sanguine in supposing that familiarity would make the strange more acceptable to Bridges; that he would, guided by tips as to the approach, come to understand and sympathize sufficiently to be an intelligent critic. A year later Hopkins has to write (XLI): 'As for affectation, I do not believe I am guilty of it: you should point out instances, but as long as mere novelty and boldness strikes you as affectation your criticism strikes me as—as water of the Lower Isis.' Criticism of that water was what Hopkins continued to get. For instance, we find him in 1882 (XC) explaining that *The Leaden Echo and the Golden Echo* does not derive from Whitman: 'I believe that you are quite mistaken about this piece and that on second thoughts you will find the fancied resemblance diminish and the imitation disappear.' . . . 'The long lines are not rhythm run to seed: everything is weighed and timed in them. Wait till they have taken hold of your ear and you will find it so.' Nevertheless Bridges, apparently, went on tracing affinities. Three years later (CLII) Hopkins writes: 'when you read it [*Harry Ploughman*] let me know if there is anything like it in Walt Whitman, as perhaps there may be, and I should be sorry for that.' Clearly the account of Bridges' attitude given in an earlier letter (LXXVII) is not less than fair: 'I always think however that your mind towards my verse is like mine towards Browning's: I greatly admire the touches and the details, but the general effect, the whole, offends me, I think it repulsive.' Six months before the end Hopkins can throw out (CLXVIII), as a matter of accepted fact: 'now that you disapprove of my γένος as vicious . . . '.

No guilt, it should hardly be necessary to insist, is being imputed to Bridges. Try as for friendship's sake he might, he could not make himself understand or like what he was incapable of understanding or liking; and his incapacity sets in a tragic light the heroic strength of Hopkins's genius. 'There is a point with me in matters of any size,' he writes (CXXIX), 'when I must

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absolutely have encouragement as much as crops rain ; afterwards I am independent.' We find nowhere much hint of encouragement besides Canon Dixon's, and everywhere the spirit expressed here (CXXVII) : ' it is a test too : if you do not like it it is because there is something you have not seen and I see. That at least is my mind, and if the whole world agreed to condemn it or see nothing in it I should only tell them to take a generation and come to me again.' It is, as a matter of fact, a musical composition that is in question here, and in music Hopkins was ordinarily conscious (though the expert, when consulted, thought him opinionated and stubborn) that he had everything to learn ; but in poetry he *knew*—he knew with this certitude what he had done and what he was doing, and was not affected in his knowledge by finding himself alone in it. That he nevertheless suffered (as a poet, that is, as well as in the obvious sense) from isolation, from lack of appreciation, he was well aware : ' To return to composition for a moment : what I want there, to be more intelligible, smoother, and less singular, is an audience.' (CLXVI).

There is nothing of complacency about his sureness ; it goes with the rarest integrity and clairvoyance—that is, with the rarest humility. The complacency is not Hopkins's ; when he writes to Bridges (XXX), ' The Sonnets are truly beautiful, breathing a grave and feeling genius, and make me proud of you (which by the by is not the same as for you to be proud of yourself : I say it because you always were and I see you still are given to conceit . . . '), we feel that he is in a position to say it. Mere playful intimacy, perhaps? This at any rate is beyond question serious (LXXXV) : ' It is long since such things [religious rites] had any significance for you. But what is strange and unpleasant is that you sometimes speak as if they had in reality none for me and you were only waiting with a certain disgust till I too should be disgusted with myself enough to throw off the mask. You said something of the sort walking on the Cowley Road when we were last at Oxford together—in '79 it must have been.' ' However,' he writes five months later (XCIII), having referred to the matter again, ' a man who is deeply in earnest is not very eager to assert his earnestness, as they say when a man is really certain he no longer disputes but is indifferent. And that is all I say now, that to think a man in my position is not in earnest is unreasonable

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and is to make difficulties. But if you have made them and can solve them, by a solution which must be wrong, no matter.'

Hopkins's earnestness could be doubted by no one capable of reading the poetry. Indeed, the question has been raised whether admirers of the poetry have not some grounds for lamenting that the earnestness was so complete. The letters provide excuse for raising some such question ; but the better one knows both the letters and the poetry the less ready is one likely to be to say anything, one way or the other. It becomes, in fact, difficult to know just what the question is. ' I cannot in conscience spend time on poetry,' he writes to Bridges in 1879 (LIII), ' neither have I the inducements and inspirations that make others compose. Feeling, love in particular, is the great moving power and spring of verse and the only person that I am in love with seldom, especially now, stirs my heart sensibly and when he does I cannot always " make capital " of it, it would be a sacrilege to do so. Then again I have of myself made verse so laborious.'

The delicacy of the issues is fairly suggested here. The critic inclining to venture that a Hopkins who had escaped being converted at Oxford in the eighteen-sixties might have devoted his life to cultivating more profitably than he actually did a poetic gift essentially the same in its strength, but less hampered and thwarted, would do well before pronouncing to reflect upon the case of Yeats. Yeats, the one major poet of his own generation, was ' free ' in a sense, to devote his life to ' poetry ' ; but was he content to be free—did he, indeed, feel himself to be essentially free? and if he had done would he have been a major poet? Yeats's best work too, one may note, is full of a bitter sense of thwarting, of sterile, issueless inner tension. And—

> The fascination of what's difficult
> Has dried the sap out of my veins, and rent
> Spontaneous joy and natural content
> Out of my heart.

—' Then again I have of myself made verse so laborious.' The laboriousness of the art was in neither poet a wantonly strenuous indulgence, a kind of cross-word addiction—something apart from the general quality and deeper concerns of their lives. Neither

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could at any time have sung with Bridges (whose interest in technique goes with his interest in spelling):

> For a happier lot
> Than God giveth me
> It never hath been
> Nor ever shall be.

That Hopkins was far from happy stands out as plainly in the letters as in the poetry. His characteristic dejection and fatigue, it is plain too, were associated with a sense of frustration. 'So with me,' he writes for instance in 1885 (CXXX), 'if I could but get on, if I could but produce work, I should not mind its being buried, silenced and going no further; but it kills me to be time's eunuch and never to beget.' Again (CLVII): 'All impulse fails me: I can give myself no reason for not going on. Nothing comes: I am a eunuch—but it is for the kingdom of heaven's sake.' About the nature of the conflict behind, or beneath, this state he is explicit enough to Canon Dixon (for whom, from reading the volume containing his letters, we come away with affection and esteem and, for Hopkins's sake, gratitude):

> 'The question for me then is not whether I am willing (if I may guess what is in your mind) to make a sacrifice of hopes of fame (let us suppose), but whether I am not to undergo a severe judgment from God for the lothness I have shown in making it, for the reserves I may have in my heart made, for the backward glances I have given with my hand upon the plough, for the waste of time the very compositions you admire may have caused and their preoccupation of the mind which belonged to sacred or more binding duties, for the disquiet and the thoughts of vain glory they may have given rise to. A purpose may look smooth from without but be frayed and faltering from within. I have never wavered in my vocation, but I have not lived up to it.' (*Correspondence*, XXI).

This says all that need be said. At least, I do not think that any attempt to go behind, to explain further or deeper, would bring any essential enlightenment to admirers of *The Windhover*, *Spelt from Sybil's Leaves* and the 'terrible sonnets.' It does not,

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however, by itself suggest the play of energy, the force and distinction of personality, the genius, apparent in the letters written from ' that coffin of weakness and dejection in which I live, without even the hope of change ' (CXXVII). The heroic strength and distinction come out in descriptions of the dejected state itself:

> ' Tomorrow morning I shall have been three years in Ireland, three hard wearying wasting wasted years. (I met the blooming Miss Tynan again this afternoon. She told me that when she first saw me she took me for 20 and some friends of hers for 15 ; but it won't do : they should see my heart and vitals, all shaggy with the whitest hair). In those I have done God's will (in the main) and many examination papers.'

The astringent vivacity of this is in keeping with Hopkins's characteristic humour—the humour in which his quality manifests itself as much as anywhere. It is plain that this humour was uncongenial to Bridges and often offended his sense of fitness and decorum: ' But alas! you will have been sickened by the vulgarity of my comic poems, I am afraid ; especially of " the Church of England " . . . But I have in me a great vein of blackguardry and have long known I am no gentleman ; though I would rather say this than have it said ' (LXXIV). This episode reverberates a good deal:[1]

> ' Dearest Bridges,—Let us talk sense. (A) There is no need to " beg my pardon " for giving me the best advice you have to give, but (B) if you must beg my pardon it takes all the sweet out of it to say " consistent with " etc.—which nevertheless you had to say: the upshot is that you should not beg pardon. Now about these blessed verses . . . my brother Lionel once wrote that somebody's joke was " strictly funny " . . . Now staggered as I am and ought to be by your judgment, still the feeling of innocence, the sense of integrity, the consciousness of rectitude have returned and I cannot help thinking, though with hesitation and diffidence, that those verses or some of them

[1] *cf.* ' I have it now down in my tablets that a man may joke and joke and be offensive.' (CLXXI).

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are strictly funny. . . . I have a little medical anecdote that might amuse you. But I am afraid we are not in agreement about the strictly funny.' (LXXVI).

The distinctly ungentlemanly quality of Hopkins's humour asserts itself in the letters more than once at Bridges' expense.[1] That, on the other hand, Bridges should, in his turn, suffer the following rebuke is all in keeping:

> ' There is a good deal of nonsense about that set, often it sickens one (though Rossetti himself I think had little of it) ; but still I disapprove of damfooling people. I think it is wrong, narrows the mind, and like a " parvifying glass " makes us see things smaller than the natural size. And I do not like your calling Matthew Arnold Mr. Kidglove Cocksure. I have more reason than you for disagreeing with him and thinking him very wrong, but nevertheless I am sure he is a rare genius and a great critic.' (XCVIII).

—Hopkins's humour is the humour of a disinterested, mature, perfectly poised and completely serious mind, and has in it nothing

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[1] *cf.* this commentary on the first line of *Prometheus the Firegiver* (' From high Olympus and the domeless courts '): ' Courts can never be domed in any case, so that it is needless to tell us that those on Olympus are domeless. No: better to say the Kamptuliconless courts or Minton's-encaustic-tileless courts or vulcanisédindia-rubberless courts. This would strike a keynote at once and bespeak attention. And if the critics said those things did not belong to the period you would have (as you have now with *domeless*) the overwhelming answer that you never said they did but on the contrary, and that Prometheus, who was at once a prophet and as a mechanician more than equal to Edison and the Jablochoff candle and Moc-main Patent Lever Truss with self-adjusting duplex gear and attachments, meant to say that emphatically they had *not* got these improvements on Olympus and he did not intend they should. But if you cannot see your way to this " frank " treatment and are inclined to think that fault might be found with *domeless*, then remember that that fault is found in *your first line*.' (XCVI).

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of defensiveness, superiority or donnishness.[1] It appears often as clarity of critical perception and direct force of expression, as here (CXXIII): 'Swinburne, perhaps you know, has also tried his hand—without success. Either in fact he does not see nature at all or else he overlays the landscape with such phantasmata, secondary images, and what not of a delirium-tremendous imagination that the result is a kind of bloody broth: you know what I mean. At any rate, there is no picture.' It would be possible to multiply illustrations of this kind, showing the critic; but if anything further is to be given it had better be chosen to show the artist, the born creative writer, who is so apparent in the letters:

> 'There was a lovely and passionate scene (for about the space of the last trump) between me and a tallish gentleman (I daresay he was a cardsharper) in your carriage who was by way of being you; I smiled, I murmured with my lips at him, I waved farewells, but he would not give in, till with burning shame (though the whole thing was, as I say, like the duels of archangels) I saw suddenly what I was doing.' (LXXXV).

That 'cardsharper,' perhaps, expresses in its innocent way an ironical element habitual in Hopkins's contemplation of the correct, the secure, the English gentleman—the critical element that be-

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[1] 'It was too bad of you to think I was writing to you to tell you you were no gentleman; that you should be saying, like Mrs. Malaprop, whom I saw amusingly played lately, "*Me*, that means me, Captain Absolute." It is true, remarks of universal application must apply even to present company and one cannot well help remarking that they do; I cannot say "all must die" and politely except my hearers and myself; but beyond this I did not aim at you. No, if I had wanted a conspicuous instance of a blackguard I should have taken myself, as I was going to do and to tell a good story too thereanent, but refrained because I thought it might look as if I wanted to draw a faint protest from you and because humility is such a very sensitive thing the least touch smutches it and well meant attempts to keep it from jolting, like the Ark when the cattle shook it, do more harm than good; but all the same I shd. have been sadly sincere and sadly truthful.' (C).

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comes more than a velleity when Bridges says that the monks in Italy were dirty. 'Next your countrymen at Cambridge keep their rooms, you told me, "dirty, yea filthy," and they are not poor. . . . And our whole civilisation is dirty, yea filthy, and especially in the north; for is it not dirty, yea filthy, to pollute the air as Blackburn and Widnes and St. Helen's are polluted and the water as the Thames and the Clyde and the Irwell are polluted?' (CLXIX). Hopkins, as Professor Abbott tells us, was a patriot. His patriotic idealism expresses itself more than once in denunciation of Gladstone. But, as appears in the passage just quoted, it was not a complacent or blinkered idealism. And in noting Hopkins's patriotism it is well to note also that he professes himself, 'in a manner,' a Communist, though 'it was the red Commune that murdered five of our Fathers lately' (XXVII—Jan. 1874).

> '. . . but then I remember that you never relished "the intelligent artisan." . . . Horrible to say, in a manner I am a Communist. Their ideal bating some things is nobler than that professed by any secular statesman I know of (I must own I live in bat-light and shoot at a venture). Besides it is just,—I do not mean the means of getting it are. But it is a dreadful thing for the greatest and most necessary part of a very rich nation to live a hard life without dignity, knowledge, comforts, delights, or hopes in the midst of plenty—which plenty they make. They profess that they do not care what they wreck and burn, the old civilisation and order must be destroyed. This is a dreadful look out but what has the old civilisation done for them? As it at present stands in England it is itself in great measure founded on wrecking. But they got none of the spoils, they came in for nothing but harm from it then and thereafter. England has grown hugely wealthy but this wealth has not reached the working classes; I expect it has made their condition worse.' (XXVI).

(Bridges, we gather, didn't like this).—We recall *Tom's Garland* (42 in *Poems*), a piece commented on, relevantly to the above, in Letter CLIX.

And this brings us finally to what is, though here reserved for so late a place, a main interest of the letters: the immediate

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bearing they have on the poetry. There are direct discussions of practice and principle, general remarks, particular elucidations (notably one of *Henry Purcell*—XCVII)[1] and so on. It is pleasant to be confirmed so explicitly in one's observations regarding the relation between poetry as Hopkins conceived of it and wrote it and the spoken language:

> 'So also I cut myself off from the use of *ere, o'er, wellnigh, what time, say not* (for *do not say*), because, though dignified, they neither belong to nor ever cd. arise from, or be the elevation of, ordinary modern speech. For it seems to me that the poetical language of the age shd. be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike it, but not (I mean normally: passing freaks and graces are another thing) an obsolete one.' (LXII).

Again and again he deplores archaism, in prose as well as in verse. Concerning Doughty he replies (CLXIII): 'You say it is free from the taint of Victorian English. H'm. Is it free from the taint of Elizabethan English? Does it not stink of that? for the sweetest flesh turns to corruption. Is not Elizabethan English a corpse these centuries?' He remarks characteristically (LXXXV) on the 'weakness in idiom of all mediæval Latin verse (except say the Dies Irae: I do not mean the weakness in classical idiom—that does not matter—but want of feeling for or command of *any* idiom').[2] He says (XXXVII) that he uses 'sprung rhythm'

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[1]He says elsewhere (LXI): 'My sonnet means "Purcell's music is none of your d—d subjective rot" (so to speak). Read it again.'

[2]It seems relevant to introduce here another illustration of the anti-academic spirit: 'Some learned lady having shown by the flora that the season of the action in *Hamlet* is from March to May, a difficulty is raised about the glowworm's ineffectual fire in the first act, since glowworms glow chiefly from May to September. Mr. Furnival having consulted an authority learns that the grub, though not so easily found, shines nearly as bright as the full-grown worm, that is beetle, and begins in March, and so all is saved. Does not all this strike you as great trifling? Shakespeare had the finest faculty of observation of all men that ever breathed, but it is ordinary untechnical observation, neither scientific nor

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because it is nearest to ' the native and natural rhythm of speech . . . combining, as it seems to me, opposite and, one would have thought, incompatible excellences, markedness of rhythm—that is rhythm's self—and naturalness of expression—for why, if it is forcible in prose to say " lashed rod," am I obliged to weaken this in verse, which ought to be stronger, not weaker, into " láshed birch-ród " or something?' Of Dryden, upholding him against Bridges who did not think him a poet (see CLXII), he says (CLV): ' he is the most masculine of our poets ; his style and rhythms lay the strongest stress of all our literature on the naked thew and sinew of the English language.' His own verse, he reiterates, is for the ear rather than for the eye, for performance rather than mere reading. ' Sprung rhythm,' and his views on rhythm and metre generally, he explains in a letter (XII) to Canon Dixon far more satisfactorily than in the essay that stands as preface to the *Poems*.

But this review must close. If it has seemed to comprise an inordinate amount of quoting, that has not been through any ambition of making an exhaustive anthology, but rather to suggest what remains unquoted. In spite of the letter-writer's repeated complaints of weakness and dejection the effect is of rich and varied vitality. Hopkins's energy was certainly very remarkable. Not content with being as completely original a poet and as extraordinary a technical innovator as the language has to show, he aspired to compose music and devoted himself to the study of musical technicalities ; we even find him drawing ; he was for the last years of his life a Professor of Greek ; he sent communications to *Nature* and he lets out in a letter to Canon Dixon (XXXV) that he is writing a ' popular account of Light and Ether ' (' Popular is not quite the word ; it is not meant to be easy reading.').[1]

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even, like a farmer's, professional, and he might overlook that point of season. But if he knew it he would likely enough neglect it.' (*Correspondence*, XXXV).

[1]' The study of physical science,' he writes in the same letter, ' has, unless corrected in some way, an effect the very opposite of what one would suppose. One would think it might materialise people (no doubt it does make them or, rather I shd. say, they become materialists ; but that is not the same thing: they do not believe

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The letters do not produce the constant overwhelming impression of genius that Lawrence's do, but greatness is unmistakably there. A classic is added to the language ; and it is indeed matter for rejoicing, especially in times like these, to be admitted to intimacy with a spirit so pure, courageous and humane.

F. R. LEAVIS.

BRITISH SCIENTISTS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, by J. G. Crowther (Kegan Paul, 12/6).

To-day we are able to look back upon the work of scientists of the past and to examine their ideas, experiments and social relationships—a matter involving a discussion and assessment of their scheme of values—in a much wider field of reference than was available to their contemporaries. Unfortunately, although this is possible, it is seldom achieved, and Mr. Crowther's book is one of the few which throw a really useful light upon nineteenth-century science. He uses the Marxist historical method, though he does not make the mistake of suggesting that scientists were entirely conditioned by social and economic factors, but carefully assesses the inter-relationship between the individual scientists, their ideas and the social characteristics of their world. Mr. Crowther set out to include physicists, biologists and medical scientists: the ultimate selection of five physicists being in itself an interesting comment on the influences to which scientific research is subject. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were characterized by the rapid improvement of navigation and the development of mining: these occupations set a premium on mathematical research in particular, and, to a minor extent, on chemical research. In the nineteenth century the growth of industry was the dominant feature, and whilst this growth was itself in part due to the advances made by the physicists, industry also provided new

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in matter more but in God less) ; but in fact they seem to end in conceiving only of a world of formulas, with its being properly speaking in thought, towards which the outer world acts as a sort of feeder, supplying examples for literary purposes. And they go so far as to think the rest of mankind are in the same state of mind as themselves.'

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instruments and new problems for further research. With the exception of Darwin, whose theories were based upon material collected to provide information about the natural resources of the different parts of the world, there were few biological scientists in England whose work compared with that of the physicists in its social consequences: the medical sciences were even less productive.

The scientists chosen were Davy, Faraday, Joule, Thomson (Lord Kelvin) and Clerk Maxwell. Humphry Davy is shown as the first important propagandist of the possibilities of the application of science to industry and, in particular, the possibilities of wealth arising out of that application. Faraday followed Davy, first as a pupil and then to the Royal Institution, becoming the accepted leader of a study whose social importance had been accepted under the eloquence of his predecessor. There are interesting similarities between the two men: their relation to anti-revolutionary French *emigrés* is commented upon, but even more significantly Mr. Crowther points out that neither was educated at a university and that as a result 'they were entirely outside the mathematical tradition of the universities of the English governing classes.' Joule is shown to have been one of the most peculiar geniuses of his time: he had an extraordinary passion for exact measurement from youth upwards. His importance at a time when the ' exact measure of " work " was essential to the foundation of trading in mechanical power ' is obvious: he can be seen as a link between the earlier rule-of-thumb experimenters and the later mathematical physicists.

If ' Davy sold science to the industrialists,' and Faraday and Joule in their different ways made possible the future appearance of a power economy, then the ' chief social significance of Maxwell and Thomson is found in their introduction of the general study of physics into the universities, so that the institutions of advanced learning became adapted to the ends of the industrialists.' Born into an industrial society, Thomson, the great experimenter, made £160,000 out of his patents and established the first British university physics laboratory at Glasgow. Therein lay his social importance and his reputation. His pupils, Ayrton and Perry, led the movement for the introduction of practical, technical mathematics in place of the classical mathematical training, and

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it is doubtful whether mathematics has had any real significance for more than a few since that time. Clerk Maxwell proved his superiority over the classical mathematicians at Cambridge and, on his appointment to the Cavendish Laboratory, adapted the study of the physical sciences there to the need of nineteenth century industry.

Mr. Crowther also sums up the scientific achievement of these men, but the value of his work lies in the careful tracing of their social relationships. A number of attempts have been made during the last few years to point out to scientists the necessity for realizing the social consequences of their work. Often, articles and speeches on these lines tend to give the impression that scientists work in an isolated atmosphere of pure research, never thinking of the ultimate effects of their work upon their fellows. This is not necessarily true: many scientists have very decided ideas for the application of their results. Davy and Thomson at least were wide awake to the possibilities. What is even more important than a realization of the potentialities of research work, is the possession by scientists and administrators of an adequate code of values—values which will enable them to see such potentialities in the true perspective—together with a freshness of outlook when dealing with the application of new knowledge. The immediate problems of the present day, the increasing standardization at every level, the inhibition of youth, the maintenance of intellectual freedom, the unemployment problem, can only be solved by an adequate blending of originality and tradition. Perhaps, as the articles mentioned above would indicate to some extent, the ideas of the present-day scientists and administrators could be reorientated, but the greatest hope lies in the provision of a real education at school and university—an education which would provide standards for evaluating new ideas and discoveries. This book is of great interest to the general reader, but I should like to suggest that it could have an important place in educational literature, both in its particular relation to the study of the sciences and for its general educational value. The author is aware, as few writers really are, of some of the more important social changes which have taken place during the last hundred years and of the conditions which may result from them.

C. E. LUCAS.

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THE APPRECIATION OF POETRY, by P. Gurrey (Oxford University Press, 3/6).

The problem of teaching poetry in the ordinary school, whatever its grade, is perhaps the greatest to confront the young teacher (the old ones, too frequently, have forgotten, conveniently, that there is any problem to face). I have yet to discover any book that is of any great value in solving this puzzle. One so admirable in its aims as Mr. Thompson's *Reading and Discrimination* may be of real use to the Advanced Course teacher, but, largely owing to its undue compression, affords little help to the teacher faced with the cheerful apathy of the average fourth or fifth form.

But whenever we come across a collection of boys of average capability who are indifferent, or even hostile, to poetry, we can usually be sure that the damage has been done by misguided methods at an earlier stage. Dr. Gurrey goes to the root of the trouble, and directs his book to improving the intelligence of the teacher, and trusts to the latter to carry out the practical work. It must be said that one or two snags are obvious here. The book may give a much improved outlook to the willing reader, teacher or otherwise, but many will be put off by the author's stern, but necessary, insistence on the difficulty of appreciation, and will, no doubt, find grounds for trumping-up accusations against Dr. Gurrey in order to excuse themselves. More serious is the large gap between the argument of the book and its practical application —rather too much is left to the teacher.

But nevertheless this book must take a high place in its class, for its extreme seriousness and unfailing intelligence. Dr. Gurrey never refrains from stressing the difficulty of real poetic appreciation ; he never lets this out of sight. Poetry is not ' jolly ' or ' fun ' or ' an awfully big adventure ' in the Barriesque sense, but the highest product of the human mind, to reap the full reward of which efforts must be made almost as great as the creator's. Occasionally the choice of examples is open to question and, although the book is short, there is a tendency to unnecessary repetition. But it will be welcomed as a valuable addition to the literature of that educational programme for which *Scrutiny* stands. One can only wish one could be more sure of its reception by the scholastic world in general.

FRANK CHAPMAN.

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